

A Brief History Of The 12th Marines



**HISTORICAL DIVISION
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 12TH MARINES

by

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Foreword

This historical reference pamphlet is the eighth in a series of regimental histories. When completed this series will cover in similar fashion each of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Fleet Marine Force, active and reserve. The present narrative not only highlights the significant actions of the 12th Marines, but also furnishes a general history of the developments in Marine Corps artillery.

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In the interest of accuracy and objectivity, the Historical Division welcomes comments from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals on this pamphlet.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. H. Simmons", is positioned above the printed name.

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Preface

"A Brief History of the 12th Marines" is a concise narrative of the regiment from its initial activation close to half a century ago through its participation in the Vietnam conflict. Official records of the Marine Corps and appropriate historical works were utilized in compiling this short history.

Final editing was done by Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian of the Historical Division. Lance Corporal Isaac C. Moon, Jr., typed the final draft, and the maps were prepared by Sergeant Jerry L. Jakes. All illustrations are official Department of Defense (Marine Corps) photographs from the files of the Combat Pictorial Branch, G-3 Division of this headquarters.


Charles R. Smith

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The Formative Years

Marine artillerymen manning their weapons have been silhouetted against the snow covered fields of revolutionary Princeton, the black sand beaches of Iwo Jima, and the red earth of Vietnam's hilltops. (1) Their mission--to provide Marine infantrymen with close and immediate fire support wherever and whenever Marines are committed to battle. The deeds of these artillery units and their men have often been overshadowed by the accomplishments of those they support. One such unit is the 12th Marines. (2) Not unlike other Marine units, the 12th Marines had its beginnings as an infantry regiment in China of the 1920s.

In the summer of 1926, the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek began their triumphal march north from Canton. Wherever the Nationalists made their appearance trained agitators soon directed popular sentiment against foreign treaties, merchants, and institutions, as well as the propertied Chinese upper classes. With a combination of military operations, bribery, and skillful propaganda, the Nationalists by late 1926 controlled the Yangtze Valley of central China and were threatening the international treaty port of Shanghai.

In response to the imminent threat, American Minister to China John Van A. MacMurray cabled the Department of State in January 1927 requesting an increase in the landing forces then stationed at Shanghai "in order to protect foreign life and property at Shanghai and prevent the seizure of the settlement... by mob violence...." (3) Not wishing to arouse American public opinion by deploying a large military force and embroiling the United States in a war with the Chinese Nationalists, President Calvin Coolidge ordered a Marine regiment to the Far East in late January 1927. This was not the first time Marines had been used. In addition to maintaining legation guard, Marines on several previous occasions had been called upon to protect American and foreign nationals and their property under attack by resentful Chinese. (4)

Gathering up Marines from Guam to Shanghai, a small provisional expeditionary battalion was organized and landed at Shanghai in February 1927. The 4th Regiment, less its 2d Battalion, sailed from San Diego on orders of the President and arrived at Shanghai, but did not disembark until 21 March when an emergency was declared by the Municipal Council of the International Settlement. Early in April, the expeditionary battalion and the 4th Regiment formed the nucleus of the newly constituted 3d Marine Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler. The new brigade was ordered specifically to protect American lives and property, and in a more general sense to prevent the warring factions from entering the international settlement. (5)

Anticipating an expansion of the disorders to other areas of China, the American government ordered reinforcements to Shanghai later in April. On the 17th, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (3/6) and the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines (2/4), in addition to support units, sailed from San Diego on board the SS President Grant for the Naval Station at Olongapo in the Philippines.(6) Upon arrival, 3/6 and 2/4 became the core around which a provisional regiment was formed. Following a month in the Philippines, the Provisional Regiment sailed on 10 June for Shanghai on board the USS Chaumont, arriving 13 June. After laying at anchor for approximately one week in the Shanghai harbor, the regiment moved up the coast to Taku (main port for Tientsin, China) where it disembarked and established residence within Camp MacMurray at the junction of the Hsin and Hai rivers with orders to reinforce American troops in the Tientsin area.(7)

Throughout the summer months, the situation in China eased considerably; fighting ceased, affording American Marines time to consolidate their defensive positions and settle into the routine of garrison duty. On 4 October 1927, the "provisional" designation was dropped and a new regiment designated as the 12th Regiment was organized under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Jesse F. Dyer. The 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment (Hq & Hq Co, 15th Machine Gun & Howitzer Company (MG & How Co), and the 82d, 83d, and 84th Rifle Cos) was redesignated with the same units as the 1st Battalion, 12th Regiment. The 2d Battalion, 4th Regiment (Hq & Hq Co, 10th MG & How Co, and the 29th, 31st, and 32d Rifle Cos) was redesignated and became the 2d Battalion, 12th Regiment.(8)

After a series of battles in which Chiang Kai-shek completely crushed the opposition of the northern warlords in January 1928, the Nationalists marched north and entered Peking in June. Contrary to the belief of many Marines and foreign officials, there was no destruction of foreign property nor attacks on foreign nationals--the transfer of power was carried out in a most orderly manner. Following the establishment of Nationalist control over northern China the American government began a gradual reduction of Marine elements.(9) On 22 April 1928, the 12th Regiment (Headquarters & Headquarters Company) was disbanded with the detached personnel being redistributed among other units. The 1st Battalion, originally the 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment, reassumed its former designation on the same date and was transferred back to its parent unit. The 2d Battalion,(10) instead of resuming its previous designation (2d Battalion, 4th Regiment) was re-organized as the 1st Separate Battalion.(11) The existence of the 1st Separate Battalion was brief. Its headquarters and headquarters company was disbanded on 8 May followed by the disbandment of the two rifle companies at Tientsin, China, on 11 July 1928.(12)

While the existence of the 12th Regiment of Marines in China as part of the 3d Marine Brigade was very brief--due mainly to the exigencies of the situation--Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune commended the units of the brigade for their appearance, conduct, and military efficiency. General Lejeune further noted in his annual report to the Secretary of the Navy in 1928, that the brigade "not only successfully accomplished its mission but established and maintained extremely cordial relations with the military forces of other countries and with the Chinese officials and people." (13)

Although the 3d Marine Brigade was withdrawn in early 1928, Marines of the 4th Regiment remained. Early in 1932, the security of the International Settlement at Shanghai was once again threatened. For the next 10 years as Japanese power and hegemony grew, the 4th Marines formed a bulwark against the complete Japanese domination of the Settlement. Under ever increasing Japanese pressure, Marines defending the settlement were withdrawn in November 1941. Early the following month the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor and the United States was at war.

The fateful days following the attack on the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor saw the Pacific defenses of America fall in rapid succession. The defense garrisons of Guam and Wake Islands in the mid-Pacific fell after short, furious battles, but Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines capitulated only after months of fighting. The bastion of British power in the Far East, Singapore, surrendered to the Japanese after they gained entrance by capturing the causeways which connected the island city to the Malay Peninsula. Australia and New Zealand were isolated, and the Hawaiian Islands exposed. Despite this series of defeats American forces began to plan the counter-offensive that would cripple and finally defeat the Japanese Empire.

The American Navy, after being reorganized and reinforced, began to search out and destroy the ever advancing enemy. Two spectacular naval engagements in mid-1942 (the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway) turned back the planned enemy invasion of New Guinea and prevented the Japanese from penetrating the Hawaii defense line. On 7 August 1942, the first offensive amphibious operation against Japanese-held territory was initiated. On that date the 1st Marine Division landed on the beaches of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and held on to its newly won positions despite intensive enemy counterattacks. With the 1st Division entrenched on Guadalcanal and other Marine units being rapidly committed throughout the South Pacific, it was evident that additional Marine divisions would be required to carry out future operations. To fulfill this need the 3d Marine Division was activated on 29 August 1942 at the New

River Marine Base (later renamed Camp Lejeune), North Carolina. (14)

To provide support for the newly organized 3d Division, the 12th Marines was reactivated at Camp Elliott, California on 1 September 1942. (15) At this time the regiment was revived as an artillery, not an infantry regiment.

Three battalions (75mm Pack Howitzer) of the regiment were already in existence prior to the reactivation of the regimental headquarters on 1 September. The 2d Battalion, 12th Marines was reactivated on 15 July 1942, at the New River Marine Base and attached to the 21st Marines (Reinforced). The battalion, commanded by Major Archie V. Gerard, was built around cadre furnished by the 10th Marines (another artillery regiment). The 2d Battalion was composed of a Headquarters and Service Battery, and three firing batteries--D, E, and F organized on 25 July. (16) A week following the reactivation of the 2d, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines was organized on 22 July at the New River Base and attached to the 23d Marines (Reinforced). The 3d Battalion, commanded by Major Robert E. MacFarlane, also included a Headquarters and Service Battery and three firing batteries, G, H, and I. (17)

The 1st Battalion, 12th Marines joined the regiment through a more circuitous route. On 10 February 1942, a fifth battalion was organized at Camp Elliott, California for the 10th Marines of the 2d Marine Division. The battalion was later relieved from attachment to the 10th Marines and assigned to the 9th Marines (3d Marine Division) to form Regimental Combat Team-9. (18) On 14 August, the battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John S. Letcher, was redesignated the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines (1/12) with N Battery redesignated Battery A, 1/12, O Battery becoming Battery B, 1/12, and P Battery becoming Battery C, 1/12. (19)

With the reactivation at Camp Elliott of the regiment (20) commanded by Colonel John B. Wilson, a Special Weapons Battery and a fourth battalion were added. Under the command of Major Bernard H. Kirk, the 4th Battalion, 12th Marines consisted of a Headquarters and Service Battery, and three 105mm Howitzer batteries (K, L, and M). (21) The Special Weapons Battery was disbanded on 28 September with its men being reassigned to the 4th Battalion and Special Weapons Battalion of the 2d Marine Division, and its mission being redistributed to the special weapons battalion and separate defense battalions. (22)

Shortly after activation, the regimental Headquarters and Service Batteries, and the 4th Battalion moved by truck to the Marine Corps Base at San Diego where new recruits were acquired and equipment added. There, on 7 September the 1st Battalion,

recently detached from RCT-9, joined its parent regiment. On 16 September, the regiment was formally assigned to the 3d Marine Division. (23)

The great expanse of the Mojave Desert in the southeastern corner of California, with its sun-bleached sand and intense heat looked anything but inviting as the 12th Marines (less the 2d and 3d Battalions) arrived on 12 October. Camp Dunlap at Niland, California was to be the home of the 12th Marines for the next four months. The sprawling, sandy wasteland with only tents to shelter the artillerymen, provided the regiment with ample space to carry out extensive field training and weapons fire. There the regiment was united on 15 November with its 2d Battalion, which had moved by truck with elements of the 3d Marine Division from New River, North Carolina. (24)

The rigorous physical conditioning, tactical exercises, gun drills, weapons training, and battery landing exercises provided the personnel of the 12th with an invaluable background upon which they would draw in the future. The training culminated in a three-day division exercise staged 27-29 December, which combined the regiment with infantry units and gave artillerymen added schooling in the techniques of support. (25) The 12th Marines was ready for battle, but not yet united with its scattered subordinate units.

The 3d Battalion, which remained at the New River Marine Base attached to the 23d Marines (Reinforced), was not idle. During the middle of January 1943, the battalion participated in 15 days of landing exercises and maneuvers with elements of the 23d Marines in Chesapeake Bay--being denied the use of beaches along the Atlantic due to the hazard of German submarines. (26) On 20 February, the regiment lost the isolated 3d Battalion when it was redesignated 3d Battalion, 14th Marines; but the void was soon filled when on 1 March an existing unit, the 1st Separate Pack Howitzer Battalion, was redesignated the new 3d Battalion, 12th Marines. At this time the battalion was located at Pago Pago on Tutuila in American Samoa. (27)

The 1st Separate Pack Howitzer Battalion had been organized on 25 May 1942 at New River, North Carolina and later became part of the 3d Marine Regimental Combat Team. With the 3d Marines the battalion moved by train to San Diego in August and departed on board the SS Matsonia on the 28th for Samoa. Upon its arrival at Pago Pago on 14 September, the battalion was incorporated into the Samoan Defense Force--2d Marine Brigade (Reinforced), commanded by Brigadier General Harry L. Larsen. Detached the same date from the 3d Marines, the battalion continued as a separate battalion of the 2d Brigade, (28) until its redesignation on 1 March to that of 3d Battalion, 12th Marines.

On 31 March 1943, the 2d Marine Brigade was disbanded, and the battalion stood alone awaiting orders. The orders came in April, but they were not those which would reunite the regiment. With elements of the 3d Marines, the 3d Battalion was ordered to conduct landing exercises in the Upolu Island group of Western Samoa. (29) The battalion had to wait another month to join with the regiment.

In late December 1942, the regiment received orders to prepare for deployment to the battle zone with the 3d Marine Division. Early in January regimental combat teams were again formed--the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines joined the 9th Marines on 1 January 1943, and the 2d Battalion joining the 21st Marines on the 25th. (30) At daybreak on the morning of 24 January, the 1st Battalion plus the entire combat team of the 9th Marines--composed of more than 4,000 officers and men, accompanied by the commanding general of the 3d Marine Division, Major General Charles D. Barrett--slipped silently out of the San Diego Harbor on board the SS Mount Vernon and headed north along the California coast. With darkness that evening the ships steamed out to sea. (31) The remaining elements of the regiment departed San Diego during the closing days of January and into February--Headquarters and Service Batteries (Advance Echelon) on 29 January, 2d Battalion with the 21st Marines on 14 February, 4th Battalion on 22 February, and Headquarters and Service Batteries (Rear Echelon) on 24 February. (32)

World War II(33)

With the strains of the National Anthem and the "Beer Barrel Polka" echoing from the New Zealand Army Band in the background, men of the regimental Headquarters and Service Batteries (Rear Echelon) and the 4th Battalion disembarked at Auckland, New Zealand on 11 March 1943.(34) The following day they moved by rail north to join the advance elements of the regimental headquarters, which had arrived in late February and were encamped near Whangarei--approximately 80 miles from Auckland. Although the headquarters element and the 4th Battalion were united, the same could not be said of the regiment as a whole. The 1st Battalion, which had arrived in early February as part of Regimental Combat Team-9, was at Camp Nathans (Manurewa--20 miles north of Auckland), while the 2d Battalion with Regimental Combat Team-21 had taken up residence at Wyler's Camp (Warkworth--50 miles north of Auckland).(35) With the arrival of the 3d Battalion--which departed American Samoa as part of Regimental Combat Team-3 on 22 May 1943 and arrived at Auckland 10 days later--all four battalions of the regiment were finally brought to New Zealand, but were widely dispersed.(36)

Once the battalions with their equipment had been unloaded and camps established, intensive weapons training, gun drills, and rigorous physical conditioning began. Noting that American youth had become physically soft, Major General Barrett issued training orders requiring all officers and men of the division to take one 60-mile hike with full pack during a three-day period each month, in addition to the regularly scheduled training program. To further prepare the men for the hard fight ahead they were to be issued "R"-rations for the hike consisting of measured portions of rice, bacon, coffee, and raisins.(37) This type of ration was later abandoned since it proved inadequate, and difficult to prepare, requiring men to build small open fires often during rain squalls to cook their meals.(38) As training progressed, the lack of suitable open terrain precluded the staging of division exercises. Regimental combat teams did, however, conduct several firing problems to further indoctrinate their rifle company commanders and other officers with the techniques of fire direction, effectiveness of artillery support; and their men with overhead fire. Speed, flexibility, and accuracy of supporting fire were continually required from each battery within the regiment.

The arrival of the 3d Battalion with Regimental Combat Team-3 on 31 May signaled the final month of intensive training and preparation. Contrary to the practice in the move from California to New Zealand, regimental combat teams were disbanded with the supporting battalions of the 12th Marines reverting to regimental control in anticipation of deployment to a forward area.

During the early years of the war, U.S. strategic planners had, of necessity, directed their attention toward the reduction of Rabaul in preparation for the thrust into the Central Pacific. If Rabaul were to remain active, extended operations throughout the Pacific would be threatened. With the completion of successful campaigns in the Central Solomons it was determined that Rabaul would be isolated by Allied air power rather than captured. To achieve this end, islands adjacent to Rabaul would be seized and airfields established. Thus, the North Solomons campaign, consisting of the main attack on the 35,000-man Japanese garrison at Bougainville and lesser landings in the Treasury Islands, became the key in the effort to isolate Rabaul. (39)

The Bougainville campaign like the earlier Guadalcanal operation had a limited objective--the capture and defense of a strategic airfield as part of the overall Allied advance up the Solomon Chain. Plans for the landing on Bougainville underwent many changes before they emerged in final form. Preliminary planning was devoted to an attack on the heavily fortified areas on the southern half of the island (at Kahili) and the destruction of enemy forces located there. As time past more conservative plans were developed and the Cape Torokina region of Empress Augusta Bay was selected for the landing since it was lightly defended and possessed suitable sites for the proposed airfield. In selecting this position, it was further suggested that the Japanese would require approximately three months to mount an effective overland counterattack.

The task of seizing the Cape Torokina region was assigned to the I Marine Amphibious Corps (IMAC) under the command of Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift. Since the 3d was the only available division in the South Pacific area it was assigned as the IMAC landing force. As the scheduled assault date of 1 November 1943 approached, the 37th Infantry Division and a number of provisional units were added to augment the landing force. (40) Since the 3d Marine Division and its supporting arms were in New Zealand, the first step of the planned amphibious assault on Bougainville involved its forward deployment.

Before daybreak on 30 June, in the midst of the driving rain and snow of a winter storm, the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines sailed from Auckland on board the USS Crescent City. The storm continued through the major portion of the voyage and on 6 July the morning broke to clear skies and the island of Guadalcanal in the distance. The ships then entered the historic passage between Florida and Guadalcanal islands where numerous American and Japanese vessels had been sunk in naval engagements the previous year. Prior to noon the ships of the



Camp Tetere, Guadalcanal. Four artillerymen of the 12th Marines waded up the company street after a heavy rain. (USMC Photo #74085)



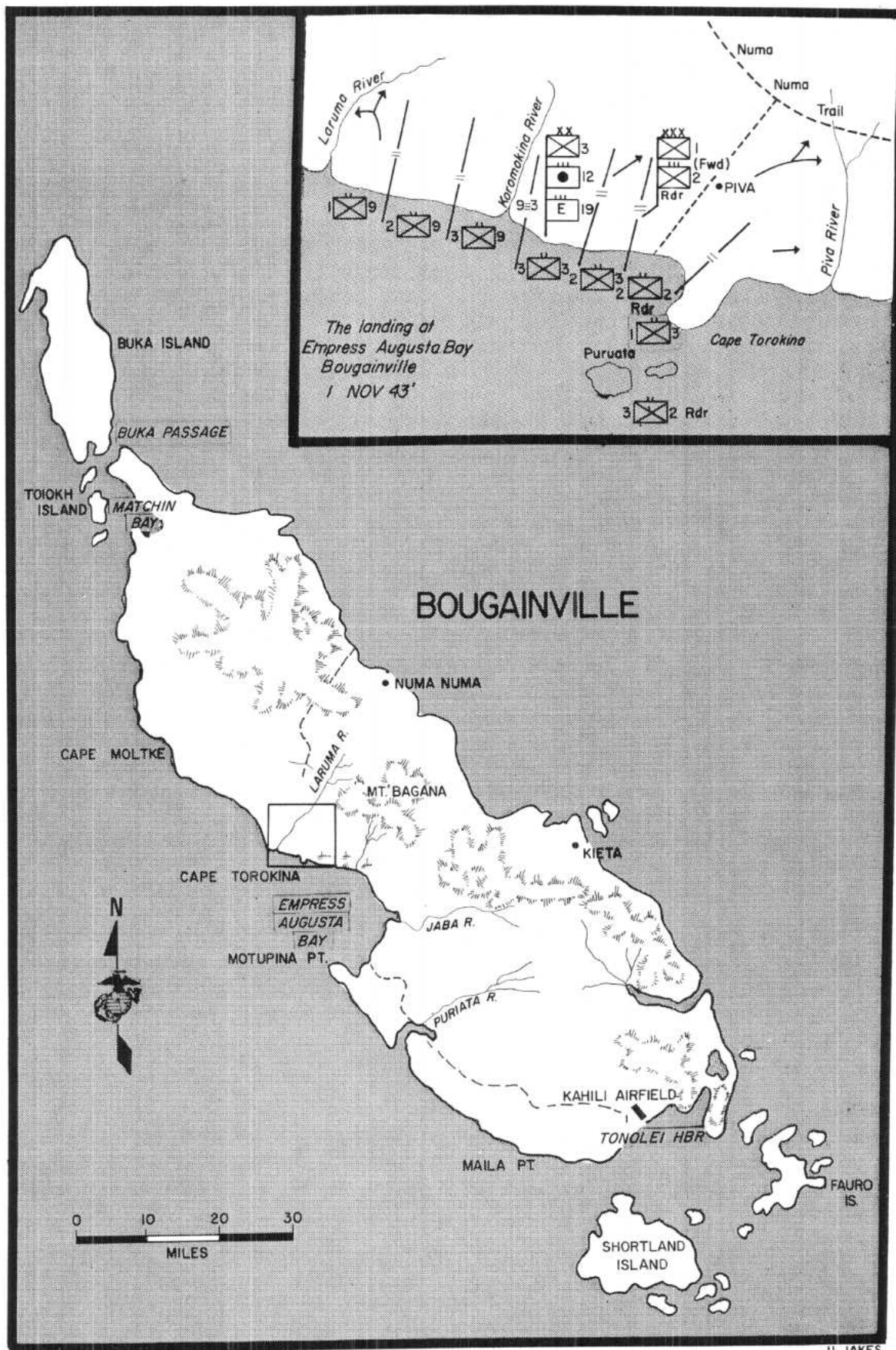
Bougainville. Manning a 75mm pack howitzer, men of Battery D, 2/12 await fire command. (USMC Photo #68266)

convoy anchored a mile offshore and began unloading men and equipment. The unloading continued throughout the remaining day and into the next, interrupted only by air raids conducted by Japanese planes based on Bougainville to the north. Throughout the night congestion of the beaches was experienced as captains of cargo ships, eager not to remain anchored for an extended period, accelerated the unloading, thus inundating the beaches with equipment which shore parties were unable to move expeditiously to rear storage areas. By the next morning, the previous night's congestion had been cleared, and tents were constructed in a coconut grove not far from the beach--later named Camp Tetere.(41)

With the arrival of the remaining battalions of the regiment,(42) the final stages of training began. Calibration of weapons, firing problems, gun drills, patrolling, command-post exercises, and amphibious training were intensified, as men became accustomed to living in a tropical habitat. When aerial photographs of the proposed landing areas at Empress Augusta Bay were received it was noted that the area was heavily forested and that artillerymen were going to have to adjust the impacting rounds without the advantage of a sighted shell burst. This problem was solved by tediously training forward observers to sense and adjust artillery support by sound. As results were achieved, the method was also applied in locating enemy guns in order to take them under effective counterbattery fire.(43)

On 27 September 1943, the 3d Marine Division received formal instructions "to land in the vicinity of Cape Torokina, sieze, occupy, and defend an initial beachhead (to include Puruata Island and Torokina Island) between Laruma and Torokina Rivers and approximately 2250 yards deep from Cape Torokina." In addition, operations were to be launched subsequent to D-Day in coordination with the 37th Infantry Division to "extend the initial beachhead and establish long range radars, naval base facilities and airfields in the Torokina Area."(44)

Once the orders were received and preparations completed, regimental combat teams were again formed. The 1st Battalion, 12th Marines was attached to Regimental Combat Team-9, 2d and 4th Battalions to Regimental Combat Team-21, and the 3d Battalion to Regimental Combat Team-3. As the Guadalcanal departure date approached, the main assault units were subdivided into echelons--the first consisting of RCT-3, RCT-9, 2d Raider Regiment, and 3d Defense Battalion, and the second composed of RCT-21 (division reserve). The first echelon (less the 3d Defense Battalion) departed Guadalcanal in two task units on 13 October and made its way south to Efate in the New Hebrides where during 25-26 October the units participated in landing exercises on the beaches of Mili Bay. The second echelon remained on Guadalcanal and departed on the



morning of 30 October for Bougainville.(45)

D-Day was 1 November with H-Hour set at 0730. The day was clear as troops climbed down the cargo nets into waiting landing craft. Prior to H-Hour, destroyers and one squadron of torpedo bombers prepared the assigned beaches for the assault. As the waves of landing craft proceeded toward the shore they immediately fell under heavy fire from the defenders. Although this shore fire did not prevent the landing, it did succeed in destroying several landing craft and causing much confusion. This situation was further complicated by heavy surf conditions which caused additional landing craft to flounder and sink. As a result of the confusion and disorientation, units landed far out of position and in areas assigned other elements of the landing force. In spite of the disorganization of units, aggressive individual action soon brought the situation under control and the assault troops moved inland encountering only light resistance.(46)

Following the withdrawal of the transport group due to an enemy air attack and its return, unloading began in earnest. But as on Guadalcanal, when the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines reached the beaches they were rapidly becoming congested with supplies. As soon as amphibian tractors transporting batteries of the regiment landed following the initial assault, battery personnel were pressed into shore parties and were thus unable to establish firing positions. Battery B, 1st Battalion, the first into position, was ready to fire at 1400 on D-Day. The remaining batteries of the battalion were not completely in position until 2 November (D+1); the same was true of the 3d Battalion. The first request for fire support was received by the regiment at 1305 on D-Day; since batteries were not yet in position and registered the request went unanswered.(47)

By 2 November, the 1st and 3d Battalions were positioned in a swampy area several hundred yards inland and answering all requests for support. Trees had been cut to clear fields of fire and log platforms constructed to support the weight of the 75mm pack howitzer. To service their weapons cannoneers had to wade about their guns in water that was often knee deep, and ammunition had to be transported across the swamp by rubber boats. During the campaign efforts were made to displace the batteries to move suitable positions but they were met by arguments from the division that the new positions would draw enemy counterbattery fire upon the division command post.(48)

The division reserve (RCT-21) was landed on 6 November with the 2d and 4th Battalions, 12th Marines, joining the regiment. Prior to dawn the following morning, a Japanese battalion (475 men) landed on the division's left flank near

the Koromokina Lagoon to act as a diversionary force for the main enemy attack scheduled to strike the opposite flank. To shore up defenses on the left a reinforcement shift took place among the infantry battalions allowing several enemy groups to infiltrate the division lines and attack its rear areas; this incursion was quickly crushed. Preceded by an artillery preparation, assaults were launched against the enemy positions by elements of the 21st Marines, but they withdrew before dusk. During the ensuing darkness a surprise artillery concentration was delivered by the 12th which was "extremely effective, and many enemy dead [300] were found in this area." (49) After a 15-minute artillery preparation the following morning, the division launched a concentrated attack which cleared the flank of further important enemy activity. Following the successful repulse of the Japanese counterlanding, the responsibility of the division's left flank was transferred to the 37th Infantry Division, whose forward echelon arrived on 8 November.

In other sectors of the beachhead enemy resistance was also being experienced. Encountering light resistance on D-Day, elements of the 2d Raider Regiment were able to make their way to the junction of the Piva and Numa-Numa trails on the right flank and establish roadblocks--some 2,000 yards from the beaches. By 5 November patrols were meeting increased enemy opposition. During the next three days raider and Japanese positions remained fluid, but by 8 November the Raiders were able to mount a sustained counterattack which carried the fight. Throughout the battle, the 12th Marines provided the Raiders with such effective close-in support--often within 50 feet of the Raider lines--that after they were brought out of line one appreciative survivor went "so far as to hug and plant a kiss on the barrel of a howitzer when he passed one of our batteries." (50)

Hard fighting continued unabated as Marines pushed to expand the beachhead. By 24 November the approximate 11,000 Japanese troops on the right flank prepared to engage the advancing Marines in a pitched battle to be known as the "Battle of Piva Forks." At 0835 on the morning of the 24th, the 12th Marines bolstered by three artillery battalions of the 37th Infantry Division commenced a 20-minute preparation (51) later described as "the greatest, up to that time, that had ever been fired by artillery in support of a Marine attack." (52) Following an enemy counterbarrage which raked Marine lines--soon silenced by a 155mm howitzer battery of the 37th Division--two battalions of the 3d Marines moved forward. "For the first hundred yards," one observer noted, "both battalions advanced abreast through a weird, stinking, plowed-up jungle of shattered trees and butchered Japs. Some hung out of trees, some lay crumpled and twisted beside their shattered weapons, some were covered with chunks of jagged logs and jungle earth,



Bougainville. Colonel John B. Wilson, Commanding Officer, 12th Marines and Colonel Walter A. Wachtler, Assistant Chief of Staff, 3d Marine Division, at an artillery planning session. (USMC Photo #74642)

a blasted bunker, their self-made tomb."(53)

So effective was the preparation in destroying a major portion of the enemy force and routing the remainder, that a sweep of the area the following day by elements of the 9th Marines and 2d Raider Regiment encountered only moderate resistance from a retiring enemy.(54) As a Japanese prisoner noted when asked to comment on the jungle fighting ability of Marines; "I don't know what kind of jungle fighters you are because you didn't fight in the jungle. You either blow it away with your artillery or push it back on top of us with your bulldozers and make us fight you in the open."(55)

Throughout the remaining days of the campaign the regiment supported minor actions and conducted patrols in its assigned area. With the arrival of additional Army troops, and the consolidation of a final defense line, the responsibility of the beachhead was transferred from I Marine Amphibious Corps to the Army's XIV Corps on 15 December. The relief of the 3d Marine Division began on the 27th as units of the Americal Division relieved 9th Marines elements in frontline positions. The final transfer of responsibility occurred at 1600 on the 28th when the Commanding General, 3d Marine Division relinquished control of the division's sector to the Commanding General of the Americal Division.(56)

In the successful establishment and defense of the Bougainville beachhead, fire support provided by the 12th Marines was accurate and effective. As Major General Allen H. Turnage, Commanding General, 3d Marine Division later remarked; "the artillery attack was beautifully organized and executed," and its "fire landed right on the Japanese time and time again and prevented them from digging in on strong positions."(57) In specifically commenting on the performance of the weapons, General Turnage noted that "the 75mm Pack Howitzer was effective where other artillery would have been difficult, if not impossible to emplace due to the swamps just inland from the beaches." In reference to the 4th Battalion, General Turnage continued; it "did excellent work in support of both flanks after their arrival on 6 Nov."(58)

Battalions of the regiment continued to support elements of the 3d Marine and Americal Divisions throughout the remainder of December and into January, until they separately made their way back to Guadalcanal for a deserved period of rest and recuperation. The Bougainville campaign had been a rainy, muddy, and sweltering one; as one disgusted Marine remarked: "What we ought to do when the war is over is give Bougainville to the Japs--and make'em live on the damned place forever!"(59)

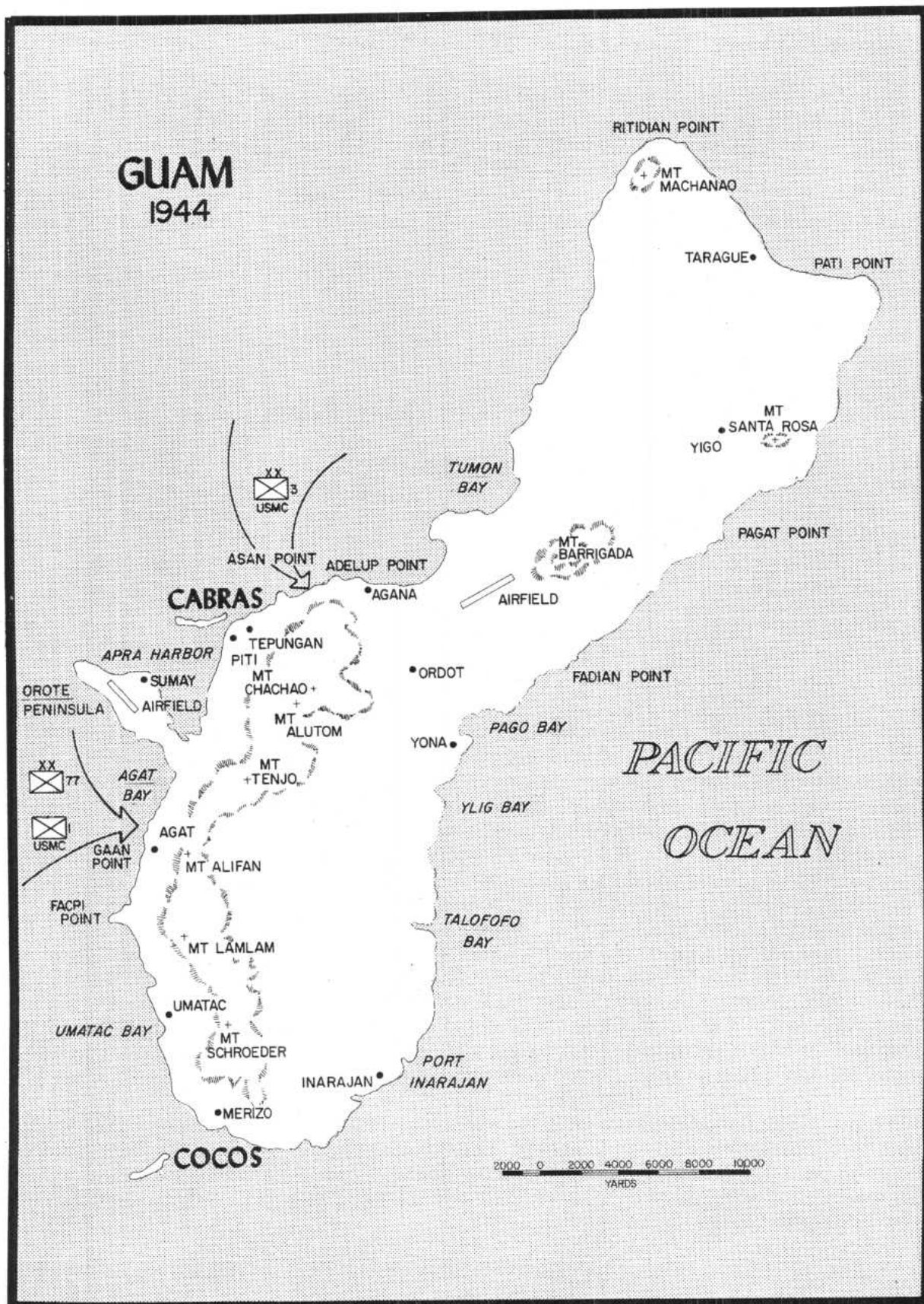
Following the redeployment of the battalions to Camp

Tetere, Guadalcanal, training was again initiated, even though at a reduced rate due to inclement weather and the encouragement of recreational activities. In addition to normal training, tests were conducted with the regiment's newly assigned DUKWs (amphibious trucks) in loading and off-loading 105mm howitzers, and the employment of the vehicles in landing approaches. (60)

On 1 February 1944, in response to changes in tables of organization, (61) a fifth battalion (105mm howitzer) was activated under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, Jr., then 3d Marine Division D-3. The new battalion, incorporating personnel transferred from other batteries of the regiment, included a Headquarters and Service Battery and three firing batteries (N, O, P). (62) Within two months additional changes in the tables of organization brought about another restructuring of the regiment. (63) On 30 March, the 3d Battalion (75mm pack howitzer) was disbanded with all personnel being transferred to the newly organized 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalion, 4th Marines (Reinforced). The following day the 5th Battalion, 12th Marines was redesignated the 3d Battalion to fill the numerical void. (64) The two changes now gave the regiment two 75mm pack howitzer battalions (1st and 2d) and two 105mm howitzer battalions (3d and 4th).

While changes in regimental organization took place on Guadalcanal, decisions were being made at Pearl Harbor and in Washington that would affect the future commitment of the regiment. In pursuance with plans to isolate Rabaul, the large Japanese base at Kavieng on the island of New Ireland, east of New Britain and Rabaul, was to be captured. To accomplish this the I Marine Amphibious Corps, composed of the 3d Marine Division reinforced by the 4th Marines, and the 40th Infantry Division, was to land at Kavieng on 1 April 1944 and secure bases for future strikes to the north. (65) This operation was seriously questioned by Admirals William Halsey and Chester Nimitz, who noted that the lesser island of Emirau (northeast of New Ireland) could be taken with less casualties and would ensure the neutralization of Kavieng and complete isolation of Rabaul. Orders were then issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 March abandoning the Kavieng operation and ordering the immediate capture of Emirau by the 4th Marines. (66)

Shortly after the cancellation of the Kavieng operation the division was ordered to prepare for the recapture of Guam, part of the larger campaign to wrest control of the Mariana Islands from the Japanese. Guam itself and the small Marine and Navy garrisons stationed there, had been quickly overrun by the Japanese as the war began. (67) By mid-1944, the 18,500-man Japanese defending forces had transformed the once quiet island



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into a virtual fortress.

The task of recapturing Guam was assigned to the III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC)--consisting initially of the 3d Marine Division and 1st Provisional Marine Brigade--and was to be made in conjunction with an attack on Saipan and Tinian by the V Amphibious Corps (VAC). Just 1,300 miles from the Japanese mainland, the capture of these three islands and the construction of fields for landbased aircraft would bring Japanese cities within the range of constant, unrelenting Allied airstrikes.

In the darkness and rain on the morning of 3 June, men of the 12th Marines hurriedly packed their gear and then motored to the coconut groves bordering the beaches from which they would embark on board ship. By noon the skies were clear, loading was completed, and the ships weighed anchor. Escorted by a squadron of destroyers the ships made their way to Kwajalein Atoll where they rendezvoused with the remaining elements of the task force. "It was a day of brilliant sunshine," noted Lieutenant Colonel John Letcher, then Regimental Executive Officer, "with a strong breeze that ruffled the blue water to make it dance and sparkle in the sunlight. In every direction as far as you could see there were ships of all kinds and sizes. Transports, cargo ships, cruisers, destroyers, and landing ships and craft of every description were spread over the vast lagoon."(68)

For almost a week the task force remained at Kwajalein while troops scheduled to make the initial landings were shifted from transport to smaller landing ships which would carry them near the beaches of Guam.(69) During the afternoon of 12 June the armada departed Kwajalein to land on the beaches of Guam on the 18th. Three days into the voyage word was received postponing the attack indefinitely due to the approach of a Japanese fleet, and the possible commitment of the division to Saipan in order to reinforce the men of VAC who were encountering heavy enemy resistance.(70) While the fate of the division was being decided, the task force cruised back and forth at sea near Saipan for 10 days. On the tenth day, it was decided that the division would no longer be needed as a floating reserve. In executing new orders the convoy of ships then moved to staging areas on Eniwetok where each transport was assigned an island, and where for 15 days troops participated in daily exercise and recreation as the war's heaviest air and naval bombardment up to that time took place on Guam. Following the addition of the Army's 77th Infantry Division to the IIIAC landing force, W-Day on Guam was rescheduled for 21 July.(71)

On 17 July, the task force reformed and steamed west toward Guam. The 3d Marine Division was to land on the 2,000-yard



Guam. 75mm pack howitzer carried ashore in a DUKW is unloaded by an A-frame attached to another DUKW. (USMC Photo #91657)

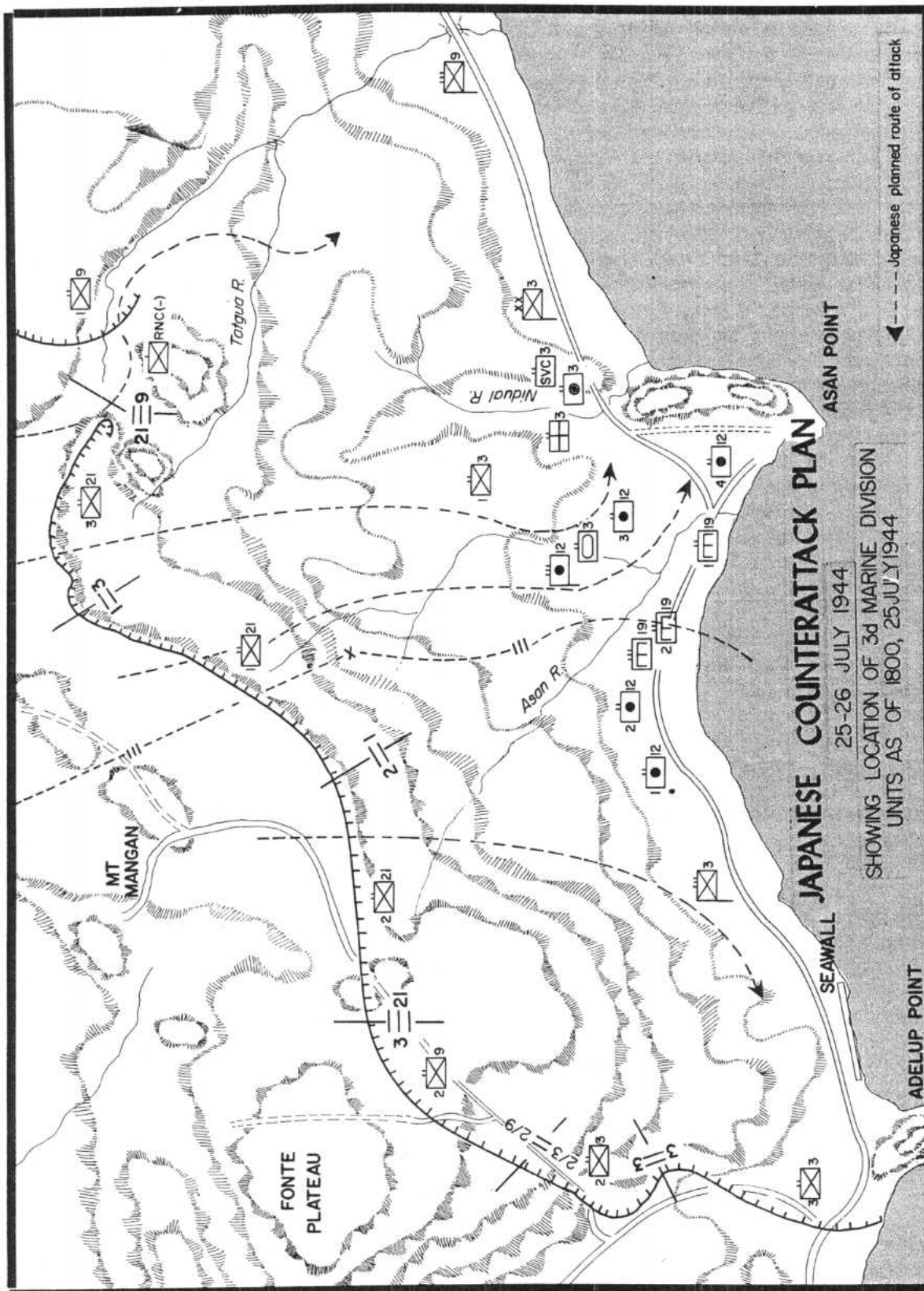
beach between Asan and Adelup Points with the 9th Marines on the right, 21st Marines in the center, and the 3d Marines on the left. As the transport group approached Guam on the morning of the 21st, clouds of dust and smoke from burning oil and gasoline dumps rose high above the island's hills. With the lifting of the final preparatory bombardment, the first assault waves hit the beaches three minutes after H-Hour (0830).

While Marines of the infantry regiments were experiencing moderate resistance on the beaches, battalions of the 12th remained off-shore and on call. The landing plan called for the two 75mm pack howitzer battalions loaded in LVTs (landing vehicles, tracked) to proceed over the reef to positions inland. Although these two battalions were in direct support of the right and center infantry regiments, once ordered in they were to land on the left flank in order to decrease minimum range requirements and render early support to the center and right flanks. The two 105mm battalions loaded in DUKWs were to land and establish positions in the right assault regiment's sector. At approximately 0900, the battalions were ordered ashore and crossed the reef under sporadic enemy mortar and artillery fire.(72)

By 1215, one battery of the 3d Battalion was in position and conducting fire missions. The remaining batteries of the regiment were in position, registered, and firing in direct support of the infantry regiments within the next four hours. Minimum range and the lack of forward observers hampered the immediate establishment of close-in support, but batteries did bring enemy troop concentrations, and suspected enemy mortar and artillery locations under effective fire.(73)

As darkness crept over the beachhead on the evening of W-Day, the enemy increased their shelling and infiltration of Marine positions. Throughout the night batteries of the 12th countered with continuous fire, preventing a mass Japanese attack. Early the following morning the Japanese attacked the 3d Marine's position in strength, delaying the division's planned attack. For the next two days the 3d Marines fought desperately against heavy enemy resistance, and by 23 July had gained the commanding ground overlooking the beachhead. Similar resistance was encountered by the 9th and 21st Marines as they attempted to secure higher ground. On the 24th attempts were made without success by units of the 9th to link-up with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade which had assaulted beaches to the south.(74)

Fighting along the front lines steadily increased during the night of 25-26 July as units of the division were subjected to ever increasing volumes of enemy artillery and mortar fire, as well as groups of infiltrators. Suddenly at about 0400, the



perimeter of the beachhead erupted--the enemy's massed counter-attack to drive the Marines into the sea had begun. As the night progressed, frontline units weakened allowing groups of enemy to penetrate the rear areas. While responding with heavy volumes of accurate fire, the command post of the 12th and several of its battalions came under attack by grenade and demolition-throwing Japanese. With explosives strapped to their bodies, the enemy attempted to infiltrate battery perimeters in hopes of destroying the guns that were inflicting such heavy casualties on their units. Without any reduction in the amount of firepower, artillerymen--from cooks to ammunition handlers--using machine guns, carbines, and bayonets prevented the attackers from destroying a single howitzer. The struggle continued into the following day as men of the 12th consolidated their positions and patrolled areas surrounding their batteries killing approximately 60 Japanese and driving the remnants into other areas where they were quickly eliminated.(75)

By noon the battle had subsided and gaps along the front lines filled. The previous night's attack had cost the Japanese approximately 3,500 men--300 of whom were killed in rear areas. "This defeat so disorganized the remaining units that the Japanese never again could regroup for any sizable counterattack on Guam."(76)

At 0630 on 29 July, the division continued its advance toward the northern end of the island after spending the three previous days consolidating and extending the beachhead. Light to moderate resistance was encountered as Marines moved from the open terrain of the south into the jungle covered hills of the interior and north. By 3 August, the city of Agana had been taken and moderate resistance was being encountered in the vicinity of Finegayan to the north. Following the scattering of its defenders, the 3d and 77th Divisions advanced in concert towards the island's northern cliffs, hampered only by small pockets of enemy opposition and jungle growth. During this period of rapid advance, batteries of the 12th Marines displaced five times, often at distances of 5,000 or more yards, though handicapped by the lack of transportation.(77) Communications with the fast moving infantry regiments were maintained by radio and wire--the latter through the use of forward switching centrals which made for rapid and efficient communication between forward observers and the regimental fire direction center.(78) On 10 August 1944, even though scattered enemy opposition was experienced and would continue into the remaining days of the war, Guam was declared secure.

In assessing the operation and the performance of the regiment, Colonel John B. Wilson (Commanding Officer, 12th Marines) recommended that the 1st and 2d Battalions be issued 105mm howitzers in place of existing 75mm pack howitzers, since the "105 is a more powerful and flexible weapon, and the use of the



Guam. 75mm pack howitzer fires support for advancing troops of 3d Marine Division. (USMC Photo #91659)



Iwo Jima. 105mm howitzer supporting troops advancing on Mt. Suribachi. (USMC Photo # 111890)

DUKW's makes the landing of it a very simple matter." This change in weapons would also "facilitate our ammunition supply problem by giving us ammunition of only one caliber." (79) This recommendation was implemented following the Iwo Jima operation.

The Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, in awarding the Navy Unit Commendation for action of the 12th Marines at Empress Augusta Bay and Guam noted:

At Guam, they landed in the face of enemy mortar and artillery fire through treacherous surf and, extreme difficulties of communication, and the necessity of shifting from one type of fire to another, rendered valuable support in night and day harassing fires, counterbattery fires and defensive barrages, including the disruption of an organized counterattack by seven Japanese battalions on the night of July 26-27 [sic]. (80)

Following the pronouncement that organized enemy resistance had ceased and the campaign was ended, the 12th Marines moved into camps on the hills above the Ylig River on the eastern coast. (81) From these camps artillerymen joined in mopping up and outpost operations, as well as patrolling an assigned area. In addition, training was conducted to familiarize incoming replacements with the basic aspects of infantry and artillery tactics. As was the case with the rest and recuperation period immediately following the Bougainville campaign, recreational activities were encouraged and men were given fresh food, movies, and greater allowances of beer--something which always served to boost morale. (82)

By February 1945, the Mariana and Palau Islands were under Allied control, while forces commanded by General Douglas MacArthur continued to consolidate and extend their positions on Luzon in the Philippines. The next step was to secure a foothold in the Volcano Islands for the eventual attack upon the Japanese Home Islands. The Volcano Islands, consisting of Iwo Jima and several lesser volcanic islands--750 miles south of Tokyo Bay--posed a threat to Allied bases previously secured in the Marianas, and to Allied airstrikes at Japanese cities. (83) For these reasons (84) Iwo Jima was selected to be the next target of the Central Pacific thrust.

Iwo Jima, a heavily fortified bastion of 23,000 Japanese troops, was assigned to the men of the V Amphibious Corps, commanded by Major General Harry Schmidt. Assaulting forces would be composed of troops of the 4th and 5th Divisions (Reinforced), with the 3d Marine Division earmarked as a "floating reserve." As units of the fleet were released from duty in the Philippines the landing date was rescheduled--after

many postponements--for 19 February 1945, and H-Hour set for 0900.

Early in February, men of the 12th were again re-fitted with combat gear and ammunition in preparation for the Iwo Jima operation. As the month progressed the battalions loaded and sailed with the regiments they would support--1st Battalion with RCT-9, 2d Battalion with RCT-21, and 3d and 4th Battalions in general support with RCT-3.

At 0900, as elements of the 12th Marines remained in the transport area or at Point Equity some 80 miles to the southeast, troops of the 4th and 5th Divisions assaulted the beaches of Iwo Jima. Resistance was scattered and sporadic as Marines moved across the island's narrow neck. Once the beachhead had been extended two to three hundred yards, the Japanese struck; their aim was to isolate and then destroy the assaulting Marines. Japanese mortar and artillery pieces, well-entrenched in positions on the slopes of Mt. Suribachi, pounded the beaches and adjacent surf. By late afternoon on D-Day, Mt. Suribachi was isolated and under heavy Marine attack--to be won on 23 February (D+4) when the historic flag raising took place.(85)

As dawn broke on the morning of 20 February the concerted drive to secure the remainder of the island was begun. Enemy resistance was heavy as Marines pushed slowly through fields of well-constructed defensive positions, and up the slopes of Mt. Suribachi. To reinforce the northward thrust, units of the 3d Marine Division were landed on the morning of the 22d.(86) By 24 February, with Marines facing rugged terrain and a determined enemy, the 12th Marines and the remainder of the 3d Division (less 3d Marines (-)) were ordered ashore.(87)

Colonel Raymond F. Crist,(88) now in command of the 12th Marines, came ashore during the early afternoon of 24 February as initial elements of the 3d Division were landing, to survey the pre-selected battery positions. Once on shore it was decided that the 2d Battalion would land later in the afternoon. Due to a misunderstanding, the captain of the USS Knox ordered B Battery, 1st Battalion to land, unbeknownst to the commanding officers of the regiment and battalion.(89) Once in position west of Motoyama Airfield No. 1, the battery in conjunction with the 4th Battalion, 13th Marines (4/13) and 1st Battalion, 14th Marines (1/14), supported the attack of the 9th Marines the following morning. As the remaining 75mm pack howitzer batteries(90) of the 1st Battalion arrived, a provisional battalion was formed, reinforced by 4/13 and 1/14, to support the 9th Marines.(91) The remaining batteries of the regiment were brought into position gun by gun until 1 March when the regiment completed the ship-to-shore movement. As other units of the regiment became available 4/13 and 1/14 reverted (28 and 26 February, respectively) to their parent units.

On 2 March, elements of the 21st Marines joined the 9th Marines on line, and continued the attack toward the northern shore. At this time the 1st Battalion was in direct support of the 9th, and was reinforced by the 3d Battalion. Similarly, the 2d Battalion was in direct support of the 21st, being reinforced by the 4th Battalion.(92) This arrangement was to continue until 16 March when batteries of the regiment were relieved.

While the 9th and 21st Marines moved abreast in their areas of operation, the 12th provided artillery preparations for daily attacks, counterbattery fire, and day and night harassing fires upon request. On two occasions (mornings of 7 and 11 March) the 12th was called upon to provide no artillery preparation in support of the Marine attack. An artillery preparation on Iwo Jima, in comparison with those of previous operations, drove the enemy into deep underground bunkers and once the attack was launched the enemy would reappear and rake advancing Marine lines with heavy fire. To counter this tactic several unsupported attacks were made:

Every precaution will be taken to observe secrecy in preparation for delivery of attack. Absolute silence will be maintained until the bulk of the 4th [Division] has been detected. No artillery or naval gun fire will be employed. No reference to the attack will be made over the radio.... The attack will be pressed rapidly.(93)

On 11 March, units of the division secured their areas of action and commenced mopping up operations. On that date the 2d, 3d, and 4th Battalions were assigned to reinforce the fires of the 13th Marines, in support of the 5th Division. The following morning the 1st Battalion joined the regiment in delivering preparation and harassing fires for the 5th.(94) Two days later, the 21st Marines relieved the 26th and 27th Marines on line and continued the attack preceded by an artillery preparation and smoke screen provided by batteries of the 12th. This was to be the "last preparation fired for any unit of the 3d Division."(95)

As the last remnants of organized resistance were being eliminated and the island declared secure, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines embarked on board the USS Sea Runner on 16 March for the return voyage to Guam. The following day, the regimental headquarters, in addition to the 1st and 2d Battalions embarked on board the USS Santa Isabel. Leaving the 4th Battalion behind to provide direct artillery support for the 21st Marines and then general support for the division upon request, the remainder of the regiment departed Iwo Jima on 18 March.(96) On 26 March, the 4th Battalion was relieved of its general supporting role and reorganized as a mobile infantry reserve force with orders to actively participate in patrolling operations. The battalion remained on Iwo Jima until 8 April

when it sailed for Guam to rejoin the regiment.(97)

In reviewing the performance of the regiment on Iwo Jima, Colonel Crist noted the often ineffectiveness of the artillery in destroying the enemy fortifications and personnel:

...our artillery was limited by the disposition of the enemy in pillboxes, bunkers which had overhead cover too thick to be destroyed by the light calibre of Division Artillery. Fire by 155's [Corps Artillery] using concrete piercing shell was necessary to destroy these structures. Many of the enemy installations were so disposed that they were inaccessible to low angle artillery fire. It is felt that many more installations could have been neutralized or destroyed if high angle fire had been permitted sooner.

In addition, the lack of solid intelligence information as to the location of enemy groups also limited the effectiveness of artillery fires. "Generally artillery was placed uniformly across the front, and we were not able to mass fires on any definite strong point."(98)

As a result of its actions on Iwo Jima the 12th Marines received a second Navy Unit Commendation. In addition, when the Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to the assault troops of the Amphibious Corps, the liaison and forward observer parties of the 12th Marines were specifically cited for extraordinary heroism.

With the campaign for Iwo Jima completed, artillerymen of the 12th began to rebuild and retrain for the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands. As men who had completed 27 months or three campaigns rotated to the United States, incoming replacement training was intensified. Early in April, an eight-day operation was conducted by the 3d Marines in which they made a sweep of the southern portion of Guam supported by batteries of the 12th Marines.(99) Results were minimal as remnants of Japanese forces on Guam continued to evade capture.

While replacement training and patrol operations were in full-swing changes in regimental organization took place. With the receipt of the soon to be approved changes in organization, (100) the 1st and 4th Battalions exchanged designations on 5 April. In conjunction with the changes in designation, the 4th Battalion (old 1st) now became a 155mm howitzer battalion, while 2d Battalion received its complement of 105mm howitzers.(101) The regiment now possessed three 105mm howitzer battalions and one 155mm howitzer battalion.

Following the cancellation of 3d Marine Division participation

in the Sakishima Operation, planned as one phase of the Okinawa campaign which was being successfully conducted, training continued unabated. As regimental maneuvers and simulated landing exercises increased in tempo, a change in the character of training took place. Strong landing assaults, rapid inland movement, and overwhelming volumes of supporting fires were continually stressed; "we were training for blitzkrieg war now!" (102) In late July, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance noted as he reviewed units of the division participating in graduation exercises; "the 3d Marine Division is truly ready for combat." (103)

While training of the 12th continued uninterrupted on Guam, historic events were taking shape on Tinian to the north. On the morning of 6 August a lonely B-29 and its escorts lifted off the Tinian Airfield and headed for Japan. As the aircraft approached the main island the escorts veered away, and it continued toward the target--Hiroshima. Several minutes later the awesome destructive power of the atomic bomb was released upon the city. With the employment of a second bomb on Nagasaki three days later, Japan sued for peace. The Pacific war was over.

Once the celebrative atmosphere had cleared, training schedules were revised allowing more time for recreation and educational activities. As the 12th Marines waited on Guam as a reserve force for the occupation of China (Operation BELEAGUER), (104) the Marine Corps point system geared up for demobilization, and many in the 12th rotated back to the United States. By 31 October, rotation had taken its toll and the 3d Battalion was disbanded, and the remaining personnel redistributed throughout the regiment. (105)

On 1 December, the regiment was detached from the 3d Marine Division and sailed for San Diego on board the USS Hampton (APA-115) and five LSMs (6, 181, 240, 323, 447), arriving 29 December. (106) With the armed forces being demobilized, more and more men were discharged or transferred from the regiment. The long hard march by artillerymen of the 12th Marines along the road to victory over Japan ended on 8 January 1946, when the regiment was formally disbanded at Camp Pendleton, California. (107)

Postwar Years

Following the end of hostilities in the Pacific in late 1945, the III Amphibious Corps was deployed to northern China to facilitate the acceptance of the Japanese surrender and assist in the repatriation of Japanese military forces and civilians, in addition to establishing order in recently vacated territory, and restoring lines of communication and trade. (108) As a component of the III Amphibious Corps, the 6th Marine Division (redesignated 3d Marine Brigade, April 1946) moved from Guam in September 1945 to Tsingtao, China. Throughout the winter months Marines of the division, and later brigade, maintained a vigilant stance as American negotiators tried to soften the virulent posture of both the Communists and the Nationalists.

In the tension-filled atmosphere that surrounded China in the postwar years, an element of the 12th Marines reappeared. On 22 May 1946, an existing unit, the Artillery Battalion, 3d Marine Brigade, was redesignated as the 3d Battalion (Reinforced), 12th Marines, 3d Marine Brigade. The battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Louis A. Ennis, consisted of a Headquarters and Service Battery, and three firing batteries, A, B, and C. (109) An additional battery, D, was activated by the redesignation of the 155mm Gun Battery (Provisional), 1st 155mm Gun Battalion, at Camp Pendleton, California on 25 June 1946. (110)

Actually this battalion had its beginnings with the disbandment of the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines on Guadalcanal, 30 March 1944. (See page 16, section II) The following day the remaining personnel of the disbanded battalion were transferred to the newly activated 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalion, 4th Marines (Reinforced). Two additional redesignations changed the numerical notation of the battalion from the 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalion, 4th Marines (Reinforced) to the 1st Battalion, 15th Marines, 6th Marine Division, and then to the 4th Battalion, 15th Marines (23 October 1944, and 1 July 1945, respectively). (111) During October 1945, the 4th Battalion, 15th Marines displaced to China as part of the 6th Marine Division occupation forces. Under pressure by the American public to return Marines to civilian life, the United States government began to reduce the American occupational force during the early months of 1946. (112) This reduction in forces led to the redesignation (16 March 1946) of the 4th Battalion, 15th Marines to the Artillery Battalion, 6th Marine Division (later 3d Marine Brigade), (113) and then to its redesignation as the 3d Battalion (Reinforced), 12th Marines, 3d Marine Brigade on 22 May 1946. The reappearance of a battalion of the 12th Marines did not, however, precipitate the reactivation of the regimental headquarters. In June, as the 3d Marine Brigade was disbanded, the 3d Battalion was reassigned to the 1st Marine Division to reinforce the 4th



Tsingtao, China. A 105mm howitzer of the Sixth Marine Division participating in celebration of Navy Day, October 1945. (USMC Photo #225995)



A 155mm howitzer crew of Battery M, 4/12 prepares to go into action during Operation FLAGHOIST--a training exercise on Iwo Jima, March 1954. (USMC Photo #A178493)

Marines, forward elements of which had arrived in Tsingtao in January 1946.(114)

By mid-1946, the process of repatriating Japanese military and civilian personnel in the Tsingtao area drew to a close. Security for the Seventh Fleet base at Tsingtao now became the primary mission of the 4th Marines and its supporting arms. In addition, training programs were scheduled to improve military proficiency and liberal leave policies were instituted for the troops.(115)

As American negotiators tried to smooth out the differences between the Nationalists and the Communists, the 3d Battalion departed China. On 24 August 1946, the battalion boarded the USS President Adams and sailed for the United States. Upon its arrival at San Diego on 11 September, the battalion motored to Camp Pendleton where it assumed control of D Battery, and joined a newly activated 3d Marine Brigade.(116)

With the demobilization and reduction of the Marine Corps strength and organization from a situation of war to one of peace, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines was reduced to a low of 55 personnel in November 1946. As other units at Camp Pendleton were cut in strength, however, the battalion was rebuilt with transfers, and by May 1947 its strength was well over 500 men.(117)

Following the arrival of the 1st Marine Division from China in July 1947, the 3d Marine Brigade was deactivated on 16 July 1947.(118) On the same date, the 3d Battalion (Reinforced), 12th Marines was redesignated the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, 1st Marine Division, and the 12th Marines became an inactive unit.(119)

Reactivation and the Cold War(120)

In June 1950 the North Korean People's Army jolted the world when it crossed the 38th Parallel and invaded South Korea. Following the commitment of U.S. Army troops, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was ordered to Korea in early July. As the commitment of United States Armed Forces in Korea grew, the Marine Corps initiated a period of rapid expansion. Reserves were called to active duty; new units were organized and old ones reactivated. With the purpose of providing a nucleus around which a future division would be activated, the 3d Marine Brigade was organized at Camp Pendleton, California on 20 June 1951. At the same time, the Marine Corps reactivated the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines to provide artillery support for the brigade.(121)

Expansion of the Marine Corps continued unabated throughout the winter months and into the new year. In January 1952, the 3d Marine Brigade was expanded into the 3d Marine Division which was reactivated on the 7th. On that date, the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines was reassigned from the 3d Brigade to the 3d Division. With the reactivation of the division a gradual rebuilding of its support and service elements was begun, and division field training exercises were initiated.

During the first week of February, the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines, as a component of Regimental Combat Team-3, participated in the division's first large-scale amphibious exercise--LEX BAKER 1. While supporting the division Marines as they aimed to seize and occupy forward bases in hostile territory, the 1st Battalion received comprehensive training as to "the role of supporting arms in all phases of an amphibious assault on a defended beach." (122) This exercise was the first of many that the 1st Battalion, and later elements of the regiment would participate in to ensure the readiness of the division and its supporting arms in the event they were called upon to commit themselves to battle.

As the 1st Battalion stood down from the division exercise, the 12th Marine regimental headquarters was reactivated under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Earl J. Rowse--then in command of the 1st Battalion--on St. Patrick's Day, 17 March 1952.(123) Two months later, the regiment was joined by the 2d Battalion. (124) The remaining two battalions of the regiment, the 3d and 4th, were reactivated on 5 September and 1 July respectively. At the time of reactivation, each battalion had four subordinate batteries, with the three firing batteries (the fourth battery was the battalion's headquarters and service battery) of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions possessing 105mm howitzers, and the 4th 155mm howitzers.

During October, the 12th Marines (less 3d Battalion)

participated with elements of the division in a second large, joint Marine-Navy training exercise--PHIBEX-1--at Camp Pendleton. In an effort to prepare the regiment for its combat functions, Marines of the 12th took part in extensive unit training which included command post exercises, loading and unloading howitzers, equipment, and personnel in DUKWs, landings, and battalion practices. (125)

The many months of training and many field exercises conducted by elements of the 3d Division during its first year culminated in a three-hour Ground-Air Combat Review, witnessed by 10,000 spectators at Camp Pendleton on 7 November. Passing before the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., "were the three infantry regiments marching with fixed bayonets, the fully motorized Twelfth Regiment towing 105mm guns and 155mm Howitzers, the Third Shore Party Battalion with bulldozers and big cranes, and the Third Tank Battalion in precision formation." (126) In addition, flights of jets and helicopters from the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station provided the spectators with an impressive picture of the Marine Corps' combat might.

In conjunction with the review, the Commandant officially presented the colors of the division and its three infantry regiments to their new commanding officers. Mrs. John B. Wilson, widow of the late Brigadier General John B. Wilson who had commanded the 12th Marines throughout a major portion of World War II, presented the colors to the new regimental commander, Colonel Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. (later to become the 24th Commandant of the Marine Corps).

In what was described as a mammoth maneuver, units of the division conducted a large-scale tactical problem in the sandy wastelands of the California desert at the Marine Corps Training Center near Twenty-Nine Palms in December 1952. Two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the problem, the 12th Marines trucked the 145 miles from Camp Pendleton to the desert training area and conducted practice firings. During this period and throughout the maneuvers, the 12th was resupplied with ammunition, food, and water by R4Q Fairchild "Packet" airdrops. With the crushing defeat of an imaginary enemy, Major General Robert H. Pepper, Division Commander, termed the maneuvers completely successful, and "quite necessary in the seasoning of a well-rounded Marine Division." (127)

In an effort to further improve the readiness of Marine and naval forces, and provide advanced amphibious and land warfare training, exercises were conducted by the 3d Marine Division and its supporting arms during the first five months of the new year. Upon completion of a full scale division landing exercise at Camp Pendleton and San Clemente Island in May 1953, the division was declared ready for combat. In June, the 3d

Marine Regiment (-), in addition to the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines (-), sailed for the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe Bay, Oahu, Hawaii. Here they joined the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines which had displaced to Hawaii in January as the infantry element of the newly formed 1st Provisional Marine Air-Ground Task Force. On 17 July, the remainder of the 3d Marine Division was placed in an alert status for deployment to the Far East in order to maintain and reinforce the amphibious and readiness capabilities of the Far East Command. Immediately, tentative plans and procedures were prepared and coordinated to provide for the orderly movement of division troops. Six days later, orders were received to execute the plans for deployment to Japan. (128)

As divisional units were brought up to strength, Regimental Combat Team-9, with the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines in support, was given priority in the movement of the division. After the combat team sailed on 5 August, the remainder of the 12th Marines embarked and steamed from San Diego on the 13th. The 1st Battalion (-), then in Hawaii, sailed from Pearl Harbor with the 3d Marines on 6 August to rejoin the regiment in the Far East.

By late August, all elements of the regiment had arrived in Japan and had taken up residence at Camp McNair. There, 3,300 feet above sea level in the rugged country on the northwestern slopes of Mt. Fuji, the artillerymen constructed a "tent-city" that was to be their home for the next two years. With the re-initiation of routine gun drills, firing exercises, and large division maneuvers conducted on the sprawling Fuji-McNair Combat Range, the artillerymen actively entered the life of the surrounding communities.

Upon an appeal by a group of Italian Salesian Sisters who cared for approximately 100 children at the Seibi Gakuen (Beautiful Star) orphanage in Kamanaka, Japan, the cannoneers of the 12th responded, first with labor during their off-duty hours and then with contributions. As the response grew, the men established the Orphanage Association whose first goal was the construction of a much needed dormitory and dining facility. Besides contributions to the orphanage, the 12th Marines gave two \$100 scholarships to the International Christian University, a liberal arts college at Mitakashi, Japan.

Following a large division-size training exercise in land warfare conducted at the Fuji-McNair maneuver range during November 1953, the division elements were broken down into combat teams with their supporting arms, and ordered to conduct small amphibious exercises. At the culmination of the three month regimental-size training cycle, the division in conjunction with a carrier-led task group, submarines, and elements of the Far East Air Force Bomber Command, made a routine beach landing

on Iwo Jima in March 1954. Following the assault of two regimental landing teams, the 12th Marines brought a number of weapons ashore during the night in LSTs which had to be beached due to the lack of DUKW transport. During the operation, the 12th did not engage in practice firings, due to the absence of a defined firing range.(129)

As the regiment returned to Camp McNair, routine battalion training and indoctrination of replacements began anew. During July, the 1st and 3d Battalions departed for Okinawa to participate in amphibious landing exercises with their assigned regimental teams. Regular training continued throughout the fall, despite effects of weather and numerous calls upon the regiment for assistance. In mid-August, the artillerymen of the 12th rendered medical and fire fighting aid to the city of Funatsu, located near Camp McNair, which caught fire and was partially destroyed, leaving hundreds homeless. Later in the month, the first of four typhoons to batter Japan during the latter part of 1954 struck. As was regimental SOP (Standing Operating Procedure), howitzers and other heavy equipment were brought into battery areas to anchor tents and other exposed structures. In addition to securing their own areas during the typhoon, the regiment provided emergency evacuation, shelter, and food for 350 Boy and Girl Scouts whose camps were destroyed by the storm.

On 1 October, despite the disruption of normal duties and field firing exercises by typhoon "Marie," a change of command ceremony took place. On that date, Colonel Louis A. Ennis, who had commanded the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines at Tsingtao, China at the end of World War II, returned to the 12th Marines as its new commanding officer.(130)

In order to build up the 1st Provisional Marine Air-Ground Task Force (Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii) to a desired strength in response to strategic requirements in the Pacific, Regimental Combat Team-4, 3d Marine Division, was formed around the 4th Marines (then stationed in Japan) during January 1955. To provide artillery support, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines was operationally attached on the 18th to the newly activated combat team. On 20 January, the battalion departed Yokosuka, Japan on board the USS George Clymer (APA-27) and two LSTs for Hawaii. The following day, administrative control of the battalion passed from the 12th to the 4th Marines. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on 4 February, the troops moved by truck to the Marine Corps Air Station where they joined the Task Force as an integral part of its ground combat element. The 1st Provisional Marine Air-Ground Task Force was redesignated a year later, 1 May 1956, as the 1st Marine Brigade, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. On 16 August 1956, tactical and administrative control of the 3d Battalion was transferred to the brigade.

With the 3d Battalion in Hawaii, the remainder of the regiment conducted normal training with emphasis on battalion field firing and amphibious exercises, marksmanship, and gas chamber qualifications. To increase the regiment's combat effectiveness, the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery was attached to Headquarters Battery, 12th Marines on 7 February 1955. (131) This was the first of a series of attached units (1st and 4th 8-inch Howitzer Batteries (SP), 3d 155mm Howitzer Battery, and 2d Platoon, 1st Heavy Artillery Rocket Battery) which joined with the regiment throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. (132)

Numerous small-unit exercises were conducted throughout the year, but due to the lack of adequate amphibious shipping no division landing operations were scheduled. Following one such small-unit exercise in May, the 2d Battalion joined forward elements of the 3d Marine Division as it moved to bases in Okinawa, in "response to Joint Chiefs of Staff directives designed to improve the strategic disposition of United States forces" in the Pacific. (133) The remainder of the regiment (less the 1st and 3d Battalions) completed the move to Camp Hague in Okinawa during the early months of 1956. The 1st Battalion completed its redeployment one year later.

During this period, artillerymen continued to support the "Seibi" orphanage with contributions, and also set a marching record. After presenting Colonel Louis Ennis with a bouquet of flowers the day dining facilities were dedicated--16 January 1955--a shy Japanese orphan expressed the feelings of the rest in response to the selfless efforts of the 12th Marines: "What else can we do but grow up to be good boys and girls with examples of American Marines." (134) One year later, men of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 12th Marines set a record by marching the 71.1 miles from Camp McNair to Camp McGill. Led by Captain Kenneth R. Porter, the 77 men of the battery made the march in 24 hours and 15 minutes marching time (32 1/2 hours overall) through snow and rain to win a \$10 bet between Captain Porter and Major General Thomas A. Wornham, 3d Marine Division Commanding General.

After the regiment (-) had reassembled on Okinawa, it continued to conduct regimental and battalion training at the Camp Hansen Range, with annual firing exercises at the Fuji-McNair Combat Range. Aside from firing exercises, the men could "always be found holding spread trails drill, digging in and camouflaging their howitzers, practicing range and elevation exercises, loading shell casings and adjusting range and point detonating fuses." In addition, fire control personnel continually conducted practice exercises in "receiving, plotting, and passing on to the firing batteries proper fire orders." This type of training constantly ensured the readiness of the regiment to meet emergencies in combat and the success of the regiment's motto, "'shoot, move and communicate.'" (135)

Several political upheavals in the late 1950s broke the relative calm of continuous cycles of division amphibious exercises and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization sponsored maneuvers. In December 1957, during a governmental crisis, the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines as part of a task force of the 3d Marine Division, deployed for a short time to the waters off Indonesia to protect American and foreign civilians and property from possible danger. A similar situation occurred in July 1958 as a battery of the 1st Battalion in support of Battalion Landing Team 3/3 was ordered to the Persian Gulf to prepare for landings in either Iran or Saudi Arabia in the event the Lebanon crisis spread. The remainder of the battalion, with Regimental Landing Team-3, was put on stand-by alert on Okinawa. As the crisis in the Near East subsided, the battalion landing team returned to Okinawa.(136)

Two new innovations appeared in the late 1950s that had a direct impact upon the regiment. The first was transplacement which began in March 1959. Previously, replacement personnel drafts were sent overseas and once they arrived were apportioned to field units requiring personnel with specific training. With the advent of transplacement whole units were shifted to replace other units which had completed 13 months of foreign duty. The most important effect of this new type of personnel shift was the elimination of excess time allocated for replacement training--a problem experienced by other units, but more acute with the 12th Marines.

The second innovation stemmed directly from the restructuring of the Fleet Marine Force. From the first tactical use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima during the Second World War, "amphibious planners began searching for an improved concept of operations that simultaneously would eliminate troop concentrations in the beach area and yet would retain maximum impact against, and maximum movement in, the target area."(137) To achieve this, the doctrine of vertical envelopment based upon the use of the helicopter was developed and employed in conjunction with a conventional surface assault. Through several reorganizations, the Marine infantry division was stripped of excess personnel and materiel in order to make the division and its supporting arms more responsive and completely air-transportable. In specific reference to the artillery arm of the division, the battery now became the basic unit of fire support, a position formerly held by the battalion. Previously, batteries were dependent upon the battalion and even at times the regiment for their direction and basic requirements. Now the battery became an efficient, independent unit, capable of providing its own observation, communications, supply, and maintenance. By preparing its own firing data, a function also formerly delegated to the battalion, the battery increased its ability to absorb supporting units that might be attached.(138)

With the changes in doctrine and organization during the late 1950s, the Special Landing Force (SLF) evolved in the Pacific. Its purpose was to enable the Fleets, in this case the Seventh Fleet, "to project its power ashore and to establish its position on the Asian periphery whenever and wherever United States policy and strategy require that this be done." (139) With "speed, flexibility, and staying power" as trademarks, this unique air-ground team is normally composed of a Marine battalion landing team (BLT) with its own service support, and a helicopter squadron--each capable of working with or independently of its controlling elements. In prior instances, battalion landing teams formed to meet a specific requirement of combat or training and were employed in conventional surface assaults. Now because of the helicopter's versatility, the BLT is deployed continuously "to respond to any situation--full combat, counter-insurgency operations to assist local allies, or merely a show of force." (140) As part of the battalion landing teams attached to the Seventh Fleet, batteries of the 12th Marines were required to spend two months of their overseas tour on board the Fleet's ships in a state of constant readiness.

In conjunction with the requirement of the 12th Marines to provide batteries for the Special Landing Force, the 12th continued to conduct numerous field firing exercises and participated in several division amphibious maneuvers. In early 1960, the 12th Marines as part of the 3d Division participated with other SEATO forces in Operation BLUE STAR--a mock battle for Taiwan. The important aspect of this operation was the full use of the division's helicopter capabilities. Both infantry and artillery elements were lifted into the target area and resupplied by air during the vertical envelopment and assault phases of the operation. This operation further enhanced the capacity of division elements to respond to crisis situations.

The first deployment of a Special Landing Force of the Seventh Fleet to meet a crisis occurred in May 1962, when the Royal Thai government requested military assistance from SEATO. On 15 May, President John F. Kennedy ordered a battalion landing team consisting of the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, and elements of Battery F, 2d Battalion, 12th Marines to Thailand in order to "insure the territorial integrity of this peaceful nation." (141) In what was described as "possibly the most dramatic move against communist aggression in the Far East since the Korean conflict," (142) Marines of the BLT were airlifted from Bangkok on 17 May to Udorn Airfield, 40 miles south of the Laotian border. While in the area the Marines conducted a joint training exercise with Thai forces. As tensions on the Thai-Laotian border eased, the BLT was withdrawn and returned to Okinawa.

During the summer of 1962 the 12th Marines experienced the first major change in organization since World War II. In an effort to increase the mobility and direct support capacity of the regiment, mortar batteries were organized. On 25 June, two 4.2-inch mortar batteries were activated for the 1st and 2d Battalions, while a 107mm mortar battery designated the Howtar Battery, was activated for the 3d Battalion in anticipation of the new weapon which was still in its developmental stages. Four months later, the Howtar Battery was redesignated Mortar Battery, 3d Battalion. (The 3d Battalion at this time was still attached to the 1st Marine Brigade based at the Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe, Hawaii.)

Once developed and tested the howtar was one of two weapons that were added to the regiment's arsenal during this period to further increase its fire support and mobile capabilities. In April 1964, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 12th Marines received twelve 107mm mortars, better known as "howtars." The howtar was created by mounting the 4.2-inch mortar tube on a 75mm howitzer carriage. The initial advantages were many; increased mobility, improved stability, speedier emplacement, shorter minimum range, increased destructive power, and accuracy. Its primary mission was to reinforce the 105mm howitzer and to act as a direct support weapon should terrain preclude the use of the 105mm. Secondly, the howtar was to "give depth in combat and isolate the battlefield by counter-fire, fire on hostile reserves, restricting movement in rear areas and disrupting hostile command facilities and other installations." (143)

The second new weapon to see service with the 12th Marines was the self-propelled M109, 155mm howitzer. Introduced into the 4th Battalion in June 1964, the M109 was to meet the requirements of the towed 155mm howitzer, then in use, and to increase the weapon's mobility and fire capabilities, eventually replacing it. Both the Howtar and the M109, 155mm howitzer (SP) were to be employed in the Vietnam conflict.

The 12 years beginning with the reactivation of the regiment in 1952 and ending with its introduction into Vietnam in early 1965, encompassed a period of rapid development with respect to doctrine, organization, and equipment within the Marine Corps. Because of the hostility of the world's two major ideological systems, this period had of necessity been one of continuous vigilance and training--from the individual Marine to that of the Marine Division. Preparedness was the watchword of this regiment, since as an integral part of the 3d Marine Division it was trained and retrained in order to maintain a continuous state of readiness; a state that would enable the division and its supporting elements to meet any contingency in Asia.

Vietnam(144)

In the early 1960s the international Cold War showed signs of easing. The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the amicability that followed in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis seemed to foreshadow a possible detente between the Soviet Union and the United States. But this hopeful progression was soon dispelled by a series of conflicts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, of which the war in Vietnam was the most dramatic and dangerous. From 1965 to 1972, 447,000 Marines were to battle in this small country on the rim of the Asian Continent.

In late February 1965, the decision was made to land a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) in Vietnam, whose specific mission would be to secure the Da Nang Airfield against enemy intrusion. This mission devolved upon the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, formed from units of the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. On 8 March, the first battalion landing team of the brigade, BLT 3/9, came ashore at Red Beach 2, just north of Da Nang. Included within its support elements was Battery F, 2d Battalion, 12th Marines. Two days later, Battery F was joined by Battery A, 1st Battalion, 12th Marines, which was airlifted to Da Nang from Okinawa to reinforce the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines. Following their arrival, the batteries were organized into a small artillery group (Brigade Artillery Group) which provided the artillery support of the brigade.

The scheme by which the remainder of the 12th Marines was committed to Vietnam may on the surface look confusing. Prior to the deployment of additional battalion landing teams to Vietnam, the regiment assigned its batteries to support their respective infantry battalions. To ensure that all Marine installations had the complete spectrum of artillery support, the 4th Battalion and attached 8-inch Howitzer Battery were apportioned to selected BLTs. This type of assignment is in contrast to the direct deployment of complete artillery battalions, as was done during World War II and Korea. A discussion of the three combat areas will serve to illustrate this type of assignment and the initial organizational structures established.

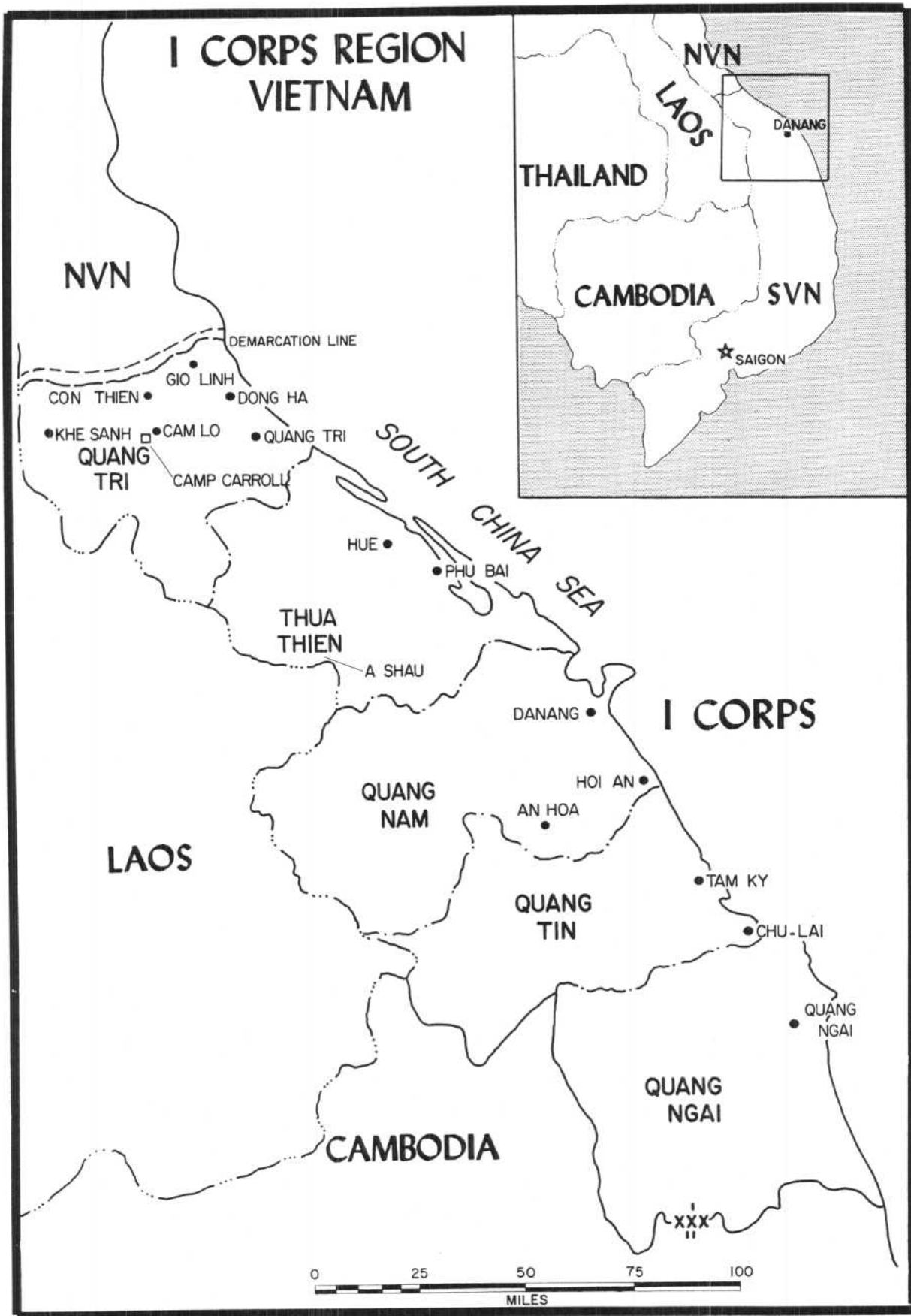
At Da Nang, elements of the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines landed in early April and were incorporated into the Brigade Artillery Group established the previous month. The group with the inclusion of the 1st Battalion contained three 105mm howitzer batteries (A/1/12, B/1/12, and F/2/12), a mortar battery (1/12), a 155mm howitzer battery (L/4/12), an 8-inch howitzer platoon, and a headquarters battery (Hq Btry, 1/12). Even though separate in terms of administrative responsibilities, the group was under the operational control of the 3d Marines.

On 6 May, the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade was deactivated. The same day III Marine Expeditionary Force (145) was established at Da Nang as the controlling headquarters of Marine troops in the five northernmost provinces of Vietnam which comprised I Corps Tactical Zone. With the arrival of the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines in June and July, each battalion remained separate and under operational control of the 3d and 9th Marines, respectively. On 8 July, the 12th Marine regimental headquarters element joined the 1st and 2d Battalions at Da Nang and assumed its supporting role of the 3d Marine Division, while regaining administrative control of its organic battalions.

With the extension of the Marine area of responsibility to the north, a second enclave was established not far from Hue, the old imperial capital of Vietnam. On 11 April, the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines was landed at Da Nang and the following morning a reinforced company was airlifted to Phu Bai, an airfield and an important Army communications center, seven miles southeast of Hue. Two days later, Marines of the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines (BLT 3/4) moved into the Hue/Phu Bai area in strength. To provide artillery support, Battery I, 3/12 was landed at Da Nang and subsequently shifted to Hue/Phu Bai. On 18 July, Battery I was joined by elements of the 4th Battalion, 12th Marines composed of the organic headquarters battery and one 155mm howitzer battery (M/4/12). To provide additional support, the 107mm mortar battery of the 2d Battalion was attached to the 4th Battalion. Following its arrival, the 4th Battalion was placed in direct support of BLT 3/4 and under the operational control of the 3d Marines, while the administrative control remained with the regimental headquarters which by this time was located at Da Nang.

As the 3d Marine Division was deploying to Vietnam, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, 1st Marine Brigade was alerted for immediate transfer to the Far East. On 11 March, 3/12 sailed with the 4th Marines from Ford Island, Hawaii for Okinawa. There, the battalion joined its parent regiment on 27 March after an absence of 10 years.

In late April, the decision was made to secure ground 50 miles south of Da Nang at Chu Lai, in order to construct an expeditionary airfield which would relieve part of the congestion at the Da Nang Airfield. Early the following month, the 3d Marine Amphibious Brigade (composed of the following infantry battalions--1/4, 2/4, and 3/3) came ashore. In support of the brigade, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines at this time was composed of the following: headquarters battery, 3/12; G and H Batteries, 2/12; 107mm Mortar Battery (Howtar), 3/12; C Battery, 1/12; K Battery, 4/12; and the 1st Platoon, 1st 8-inch Howitzer Battery (SP). In August, with the addition of the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, both battalions--some 62 pieces in all--joined to form an artillery group under the command of Lieutenant Colonel



Leslie L. Page, Commanding Officer, 3/12, which supported the 4th and 7th Marines. The operational control of the group rested with Brigadier General Frederick J. Karch, who was base coordinator at Chu Lai and an artilleryman himself, while the administrative control was lodged with the 12th Marines regimental headquarters at Da Nang.

By early August, the entire regiment with attached units representing the complete spectrum of artillery support within the Marine Corps--light, medium, and heavy weapons--was in Vietnam. The employment of the regiment and its elements was basically the same as its utilization during World War II; direct support of a specific unit or general support of a number of units within the division. This was not to change throughout the course of Marine participation in the Vietnam conflict.

In pursuance of the Marines' defensive posture during the initial period, March to early August 1965, the scope of the regiment's activities was limited. The major thrust of concern was with the improvement of its combat readiness. To achieve this end, the activities of the subordinate battalions at the three enclaves were similarly tailored: preparation of battery and defensive positions placing the largest requirement on time and materials, establishment of communications, vehicle and weapons maintenance, extensive target survey and fire support planning, registration of weapons, service practice, local security, forward observer and enemy aircraft recognition classes, and command post exercises. Since the mission was one of defense, the regiment's combat fire support was limited to the support of patrol and defensive actions aimed at safeguarding the important military installations.

With the approach of the monsoon season, it became "obvious that neither the air war, nor the ground war, nor the political war was going well." (146) The initial mission of the 16,000 Marines in I Corps Tactical Area was to secure major bases, in hopes that the South Vietnamese could successfully carry the brunt of combat operations. These hopes, by late July, had vanished with the concentration of large numbers of Communist forces throughout South Vietnam. In order to stem the immediate threat, General William Westmoreland, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, on 6 August, authorized III MAF to undertake offensive operations in I Corps as well as maintaining the responsibility for base defense. (147)

The first offensive operations in I Corps were small in scale and centered around Chu Lai. In these operations, which turned out to be little more than field exercises against very light resistance, the 4th Marines in conjunction with units of the 2d ARVN Division swept areas west of the airfield. Supporting the infantry operations with landing zone preparations and other

forms of direct support, batteries of the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines gained experience that would be invaluable in future operations. Though moderately successful, the operations reemphasized the necessity of coordinating all fire support through a single agency--the Fire Support Coordination Center. In addition, U.S. and ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) infantry units found that separate and distinct zones of action were necessary, and that advisors with Vietnamese units had to act not only as advisors but as liaison officers between the Vietnamese and American Units.

In mid-August, Marine artillery received its first test in the full-scale offensive operation, STARLITE. For some time there had been intelligence reports which placed the 1st Viet Cong Regiment in prepared positions on the Van Tuong Peninsula, south of Chu Lai. With this information in hand, the 7th Marines jumped into action on 18 August, in what was the first Marine regimental-sized combat operation since the Korean War. In support were approximately 18 pieces of the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines Artillery Group. As Marines of RLT-7 made an amphibious landing and helicopter-borne assaults, a 107mm mortar battery (3/11) of the group was helilifted into the area to provide direct support for infantry elements. General support was provided by K/4/12, which moved into a position within the Tactical Area of Operations, but beyond the Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA) for a period of eight days. This 155mm howitzer battery provided artillery support for Marine and ARVN infantry units during the later stages of the operation.

Throughout the operation the 1st Viet Cong Regiment discovered how devastating Marine artillery could be. During the seven days of the operation, the batteries fired 2,446 rounds of high explosive, white phosphorus, and illumination as missions were called by forward observers with the infantry against enemy fortifications, troop concentrations, suspected assembly areas, and likely avenues of approach. Preparations of landing zones for heliborne assaults, however, provided the batteries with the largest work load during the operation. The most significant single artillery mission occurred when the 107mm Mortar Battery, 3/11 engaged a Viet Cong company marching along a road. The resultant mortar fire left 90 enemy dead.

Operation STARLITE expanded the Marine function beyond that of base defense and marked the beginning of large scale operations as part of a balanced approach in the attempt to eliminate enemy influence. The consolidation of each of the three separate areas of Marine activity through the use of large scale operations, small counter guerrilla operations, and substantial civic action efforts, now allowed Marines to redirect their attention to the traditional Viet Cong strongholds throughout I Corps. In the fall and winter months of 1965, Marines took the war to

the enemy with an additional large unit operation, employing rapid maneuver and long range mobility in combination with air, artillery, and naval gunfire resources.

The artillery, although primarily committed to Marine operations, had at the same time other important tasks to support. In attempts to protect villagers and win their confidence, elements of the 12th Marines contributed to the overall village defense effort. An example of one such contribution was made by Battery I, 3/12, at Phu Bai during August 1965. In conferences with chiefs of villages within the range of his howitzers, Captain Donald N. Harmon, Commanding Officer I/3/12, unveiled a plan whereby artillery concentrations could be fired on all possible avenues of enemy access to the villages upon the requests of village chiefs. These concentrations were then individually pre-fired to determine the exact firing data. However, prior to firing-in, the villagers were evacuated to ensure their safety. Once the data was established the village chiefs could then be assured of immediate artillery support to counter enemy attacks. In assessing the effects of the concentrations, Major General Lewis W. Walt, Commanding General of III MAF, commented; "the survey concentration target areas have a definite deterrent effect against the enemy, and have greatly increased the relations which our Marines enjoy with the Vietnamese people in our combined fight against the Viet Cong." (148)

With the consolidation and expansion of Marine areas it soon became apparent that future confrontations between Marine and Viet Cong Main Force units were inevitable. The expansion of the Marine tactical areas at Da Nang, Chu Lai, and Hue/Phu Bai had progressed to such an extent that Marines now constituted an imminent threat to the Viet Cong position and organization. As a result, the enemy had to take action. For two months following STARLITE and Operation PIRANHA, the enemy remained inactive, successfully eluding Marine units. In December 1965, however, a coordinated Marine/ARVN search and destroy operation-- Operation HARVEST MOON--was initiated in the Hiep Duc/Que Son Valley south of Da Nang, to counter the threat posed by the 1st Viet Cong Regiment.

In what was the largest Marine operation since their arrival in March, elements of the 3d and 7th Marines landed in the area by helicopter on 9 December as ARVN elements moved into the area overland. To provide artillery support, a provisional artillery battalion was formed consisting of two 105mm batteries (A/1/11 and F/2/12) and one 155mm battery (M/4/11). An additional 155mm battery, L/4/12, was brought into the operation on the 11th to provide general support for the attacking units, thus reinforcing M/4/11. Three of the batteries deployed beyond the III MAF Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) by motor transport, while the fourth, F/2/12, was helilifted into position; "this was

the first time this [had] been accomplished by a Marine 105 Howitzer Battery under combat conditions." (149)

Enemy resistance was heavy, and on 10 December, and again on the 11th, elements of the Special Landing Force of the Seventh Fleet were landed by helicopter in an effort to encircle enemy units. The enemy, in attempting to escape encirclement, began to carry out an effective campaign of harassment. On 19 December, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines was ambushed by a Viet Cong battalion, as it marched out of the area of operations. In a violent response, Marine air and artillery (M/4/11) dealt a stunning blow to the enemy force. As a result of the 10 day operation, the enemy lost a total of 407 men and a substantial amount of equipment. With the dispersal of the 1st Viet Cong Regiment the forward logistical support areas (LSA) and artillery positions of III MAF were established outside the TAORs and resupplied by motor transport convoys for the first time.

As Marine influence was extended beyond the three enclaves and into hotly contested areas in such operations as DOUBLE EAGLE, MALLARD, GEORGIA, OREGON, ORANGE, JAY, and CHEROKEE, carried out during the first six months of 1966, the basic tactics of artillery support changed little. Throughout the period, the mission of the 12th Marines remained as it had been before; displacement in direct/general support of multi-battalion and small unit operations, and support for base, convoy, and village defense. (150) In more general terms, the 12th provided an artillery umbrella for Marine activities in its assigned area of operation. However, this period was also one in which innovations were added, problems encountered, and refinements in several established techniques were accomplished in response to changing tactical situations and developments.

As in previous wars where artillery had been put to extensive use in populated areas, the rules of engagement had to be tailored to meet the situation. The main effort in Vietnam was aimed at the defeat of Communist main force units and the elimination of the Viet Cong infrastructure throughout the country. Concurrent with this effort was the desire to win the confidence of the people. Thus, in determining where and how artillery was to be used, both the military and the psychological effect upon the population had to be considered. Had artillery been used indiscriminately and only with the thought of achieving momentary military advantage at the expense of noncombatants, the long-term pacification effort would have been lost. As a result, when artillery was used in preparations for landing zones, reconnaissance by fire, and harassing and interdiction fires, it had to be used discriminately so as to minimize the destruction of property and civilian casualties. If it were not, such unrestrained use of artillery would be the subject of Communist exploitation. When an operation was slated for a certain area,

liaison was established early with South Vietnamese military and civilian officials, often times down to the village level, to assist in problems that might arise during the operation. This type of cooperation greatly facilitated the planning of artillery fires and the lessening of noncombatant casualties. Both the coordination and restraints exercised by the artillery in Vietnam should not be construed as a limit upon its response to hostile actions. Intense and precise planning would eliminate the over use of artillery. In the last analysis, however, the field commander and the fire support coordination center would be the final judges when to call upon supporting arms fire.

An additional facet in the control of supporting arms was the development of SAV-A-PLANE. Due to the problem of crowded air space in certain areas of Vietnam, particularly along Route 1 in I Corps, an artillery unit operating within the area had to contend with innumerable aircraft--from helicopters to commercial airliners--which penetrated its zone of action. To lessen the competition for air space and prevent the accidental shooting down of a friendly aircraft, the SAV-A-PLANE technique was developed. The technique involved a message that was sent indicating the location of the target, the location of the artillery (or naval gunfire) unit, the time the fire was to commence, and the maximum ordinate of the trajectory. After this information was supplied it was the responsibility of the pilot to avoid the firing area. To further ensure that friendly aircraft were not shot out of the air by Allied artillery and naval gunfire, the traditional use of an aircraft sentry at a battery position was employed. In addition, the forward artillery observer was co-located with the forward air controller to coordinate artillery fire with airstrikes and made it possible for the immediate lifting or shifting of artillery fires should a friendly aircraft stray into the zone of fire.

In Vietnam, the employment of a battery as a separate and distinct unit in providing direct support for infantry units was developed to the fullest. From the first introduction of Marine combat forces in March 1965, the battery became the basic unit of support. Its versatility in terms of separate fire direction and communications capability, rapid deployment by helicopter, and 360 degree fire capacity, enabled a single battery to provide support to the infantry normally supported by a battalion in a conventional war.

Due to the flexibility of the artillery battery, much innovation and experimentation as to the tactical use of artillery was permitted. In an effort to improve artillery support, tried practices were strengthened and expanded, and new ones developed to meet changing situations. Consequently, much energy was expended to seek new methods of increasing the rapid delivery and accuracy of artillery fires. Prior to the deployment of

an infantry unit, artillery fires would be precisely planned to cover the insertion, protection, orientation, and for the extraction of the unit should it become necessary. Once a forward observer communicated his request for artillery support, usually all that was needed was the clearance to fire.

As Marine units extended their areas of responsibility into what had hitherto been Viet Cong sanctuaries or strongholds, reconnaissance teams were sent beyond the TAORs. The primary mission of these teams (code named STING-RAY) was to gather intelligence about enemy troop movements, strong points, and assembly areas. However, it soon became apparent that the team could effectively direct air and artillery strikes on lucrative enemy targets without compromising their positions. The platoon or team leader now became the extension of the forward observer usually based with an infantry unit of a larger size. In addition, the effects of the STING-RAY operations negated the thought that the Vietnamese hinterlands would always be a Viet Cong reserve. A corollary development of the STING-RAY technique was that of artillery ambushes. Once a team had been inserted, it would pick out trails and stream fording points of likely Viet Cong traffic. Artillery would then be targeted on the routes. If enemy groups were observed, the artillery response was rapid and deadly. (151)

A type of combat reminiscent of the Japanese counterattacks on Guam, was experienced by artillerymen of the 12th Marines throughout the course of their participation in the Vietnam conflict. As the tactical areas of Marine responsibility extended and artillery was deployed into less secure areas to support operations, the relative security of the larger military installations was left behind. Once in battery positions away from the major bases, the batteries were subjected to an increased number of short and violent Viet Cong attacks carried out under the cover of darkness. The first major attack occurred on the night of 18 April 1966, as the positions of K/4/12 and A/1/11, northwest of Da Nang, were hit by a mortar and ground attack. (152) At 0145, Battery K received enemy mortar and small arms rounds and responded with small arms fire and direct fire from its 155mm howitzers (SP). At approximately the same time A/1/11 came under heavy attack by an estimated Viet Cong company (50-60 men). Armed with bangalore torpedoes, small arms, satchel charges, and grenades, the lightly clad enemy force immediately penetrated the perimeter and overran the security outposts. Once inside the battery perimeter, the force destroyed two howitzers, and damaged the remaining pieces. At 0204 illumination was requested from A/1/12 and Mortar Battery, 1/12 by radio since all wire communications were cut prior to the attack. Due to the surprise and swiftness by which the attack was carried out, only one fire mission against the attacking force was completed. The attack subsided at approximately 0500; in its wake the enemy force left 15 killed, while the

defenders suffered 5 killed and 28 wounded. The following morning elements of the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines swept the area, but with negative results.(153) This type of attack was to persist as Marines continued to leave secure areas in search of an elusive enemy. At times these attacks resulted in heavy casualties on both sides.

The influx of large contingents of American forces into South Vietnam during 1965 and their early successes reversed the military situation. By mid-1966, the precarious political situation was partially stabilized, thus reducing the chances of a quick Communist victory. Although the North Vietnamese made no changes in basic aims, they did open a new front just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) by invading the area in division strength and increasing infiltration throughout other areas of South Vietnam. Many Allied commanders believed that by extending the war into the DMZ area the North Vietnamese hoped to neutralize the expansion of Marine influence in I Corps, to take the pressure off Viet Cong units operating farther south by diverting U.S. attention to the northern sector of Vietnam, and to disrupt the pacification program.

As increasing amounts of intelligence information were received, III MAF conducted several battalion-sized operations in Quang Tri Province during May and early June, but without success. In early July, solid intelligence was received which placed several large North Vietnamese regular units just south of the DMZ. As General Lewis Walt later noted:

This was a turning point in the conflict. Until early 1966 my men had been widely dispersed, exercising the greatest amount of security over the greatest number of people, concentrating only when we found Viet Cong Main Force units trying to bolster the hapless and struggling guerrilla, or to protect our most vital installations against guerrilla attack. Now we were in a situation similar to that in Korea in 1950--an army coming down from the north to seize and hold ground.(154)

Once the enemy's intentions became known to U.S. military commanders, it was decided in early July to shift the necessary Marine forces from southern I Corps into Quang Tri Province to stem North Vietnamese infiltration, and halt the enemy's advance.

Before possible North Vietnamese offensive operations could be launched, five Marine infantry battalions (2/1, 2/4, 3/4, 1/3, and 1/1), designated Task Force Delta, and an equal number of ARVN units converged on areas in Quang Tri Province. To provide artillery support the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines (-)(Rein) moved from Phu Bai to the Dong Ha area on 12-13 July to join H/3/12 which had displaced to the area the previous month. On

15 July, Operation HASTINGS, the largest coordinated offensive operation up to that time, was initiated. Under the protective cover of 3/12, infantry elements of the combined force were inserted into landing zones, established blocking positions along enemy trails, and initiated search and destroy operations throughout the assigned area. The following day, the Seventh Fleet Special Landing Force began Operation DECKHOUSE II which was slated to protect the seaward flanks of the main operation. As Task Force Delta was bolstered by SLF units, additional batteries (11th Marines) were brought in to reinforce the fires of 3/12.

Once underway, HASTINGS was characterized by a number of sharp, violent, small unit engagements with an occasional large encounter. In all instances, 3/12 in combination with other supporting arms accounted for the majority of the 824 enemy casualties. On 3 August, Operation HASTINGS terminated as the remnants of North Vietnamese regular units retreated back across the DMZ or into sanctuaries in Laos.

With the termination of HASTINGS, a new operation, PRAIRIE, was begun in the same area. Slated to seek out and destroy the remaining North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops and prevent further infiltration attempts, additional infantry battalions and artillery batteries were added to this search and destroy operation under the control of the 4th Marines. Throughout August and September, 3/12 which had operational control over approximately nine batteries, supported the various activities of the infantry battalions. Fire missions during this period were concerned with the reduction of enemy fortifications, troops, and infiltration routes, and the support of reconnaissance teams operating in the southern and western reaches of Quang Tri Province. In several instances, fire missions undertaken as a result of a reconnaissance team's request were instrumental in inflicting heavy enemy casualties.

In early October, as Operation PRAIRIE was expanded, several major changes in the location and organization of the regiment took place. As the responsibility for the Da Nang TAOR was passed to the 1st Marine Division and the 3d Marine Division shifted its forces to the north, the 12th Marine regimental headquarters with its 1st and 4th Battalions moved by truck and landing craft to the Dong Ha area. With the departure of the 12th Marines (-) (Rein), the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines was assigned on 10 October to the 1st Division as its component batteries continued to participate in combat operations south and west of Da Nang. Upon the arrival of the regiment at Dong Ha, it was positioned into a triangular operational area near the DMZ cornered by Dong Ha, Camp J.J. Carroll, and Cam Lo, with several intermediate positions. Following redeployment, the regiment assumed control of two Army battalions--1st Battalion, 40th Artillery (105mm howitzers (SP)) and 2d Battalion, 94th



Cannoneers of 12th Marines supporting Operation PRAIRIE, October 1966. (USMC Photo #A187927)



A 155mm howitzer (self-propelled) of Battery M, 4/12 fires on enemy positions near Phu Bai, Republic of Vietnam. (USMC Photo #A188024)

Artillery (175mm guns (SP))--which were to act as a general support element of the division. With the increased capability for long-range support provided by the 175mm guns, the 12th now created an artillery umbrella stretching from the South Vietnam/Laos border to the South China Sea.

As units of the 12th Marines moved into northern I Corps, the artillery support for the Phu Bai TAOR was temporarily diminished. With the movement of 3/12 in July 1966, 4th Marine units operating within the TAOR were provided support by two to three batteries under the direction of 3/12 Rear. In October, a provisional artillery battalion was formed at Phu Bai incorporating the three batteries from the 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions, and an additional battery of 155mm self-propelled howitzers. The Provisional Artillery unit supported combat operations within the Phu Bai TAOR until 17 December when 4/12 headquarters element displaced to Phu Bai and in the process absorbed the provisional battalion.

The end of 1966 found the 12th Marines centered in three locations and supporting three major Marine operations. South of Da Nang, elements of the 2d Battalion under the operational control of the 11th Marines, 1st Marine Division continued to support operations in the An Hoa area. In northern I Corps, the remaining elements of the 12th Marines were divided into two camps; one at Phu Bai and the other at Dong Ha. In the Phu Bai TAOR elements of the 3d Battalion which had displaced temporarily to the area, and the 4th Battalion, supported Operation CHINOOK which was initiated in mid-December to block enemy infiltration routes into the coastal plains and the city of Hue. This operation was to continue into early February. Further north, batteries of the 1st, 3d (-), and 4th Battalions, reinforced by 1/40 and 2/94 continued to support Operation PRAIRIE. In conjunction with combat operations in Vietnam, several batteries of the regiment were withdrawn, sent to Okinawa to reequip and retrain, and then joined the battalion landing teams of the Seventh Fleet. This practice had been abandoned in June of 1965, but was reinstituted as elements of the 5th Marine Division were brought into Vietnam one year later.

General William Westmoreland summed up the situation in Vietnam of early 1967 by indicating that "the momentum gained by the end of 1966 was carried over into 1967. Additional troops and other valuable resources enable the scope and pace of our offensive operations to increase steadily throughout the year." (155) In specific reference to I Corps Tactical Zone, General Westmoreland continued:

In the northern part of the I Corps, our objectives for 1967 were to meet and defeat North Vietnam's invasion through the DMZ and Laos, to interdict the enemy's infiltration routes in South Vietnam, and to

neutralize his base areas near the coastal plain, which provided his guerrilla forces much of their support. Equally important in the southern portion of the corps zone was the protection of our base areas and the lines of communication that enabled the government to extend its control.(156)

For the 12th Marines, which at this time was in support of both the 1st and 3d Marine Divisions, the course for 1967 was set.

Throughout the first three months of 1967 elements of the 1st (-), 3d (-), and 4th (-) Battalions, and attached Army artillery units, continued to provide support for the PRAIRIE and CHINOOK series of operations, ARVN/GVN forces, and patrol activities of the 3d Reconnaissance Battalion. With the conclusion of the monsoon season in early February, enemy contact began to increase as the North Vietnamese stepped up attempts to infiltrate men and equipment into the south. In addition, aerial reconnaissance during this period located evidence of large NVA troop and material concentrations north of the Ben Hai River which separates North Vietnam from the South and bisects the Demilitarized Zone. As a result, III MAF requested and received authorization in late February to conduct artillery fire missions against purely military targets in and north of the DMZ. This authority was granted in order to supplement airstrikes against military targets in the DMZ during periods of reduced visibility, to provide protection for long-range reconnaissance flights by destroying known antiaircraft sites, and to disrupt lines of communication over which the North Vietnamese were resupplying their units in the DMZ and northern Quang Tri Province. In response to the authorization, the 12th Marines on 26 February activated the 1st Composite Provisional Battalion. Composed of a detachment from Headquarters Battery, 1/12, and Batteries C/1/12 and B/2/94, the battalion moved the same date to the Gio Linh outpost--approximately one mile south of the DMZ--where it initiated Operation HIGHRISE (artillery fires targeted within the DMZ and North Vietnam). Another position was established further west at Cam Lo the following month.

During March and early April 1967, enemy forces within the DMZ and other sectors of Quang Tri Province increased the pressure on Marine units and installations. With the advent of the dry summer months in I Corps, the North Vietnamese hoped to increase the infiltration rate, thus drawing Marine forces away from the lowlands and into the mountains. In response, an Army task force was deployed to the Chu Lai area. The arrival of Army troops in Quang Ngai Province allowed the 7th Marines to move north from Chu Lai to Da Nang, thus freeing the 9th Marines and permitting their northward deployment. In conjunction, the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines moved northward from Da Nang and established a command post at Dong Ha on 22 April.

The following day the 2d Battalion rejoined the regiment and continued its operational role of directly supporting the 9th Marines.

The realignment of Marine forces in northern I Corps throughout March and April was accomplished at the beginning of a critical period in the Vietnam war. No longer were enemy forces willing to take the incessant beatings the Marines were giving them; a significant and clear-cut victory was needed. On the morning of 24 April, what began as a brief patrol engagement near the small outpost of Khe Sanh soon mushroomed into a series of intense battles that lasted until 12 May. This engagement seemed to have prematurely revealed the enemy's plans of attacking the Khe Sanh base in a fashion similar to that of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. (157) The following day the outpost was reinforced by the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines which then proceeded to engage entrenched enemy forces in order to secure the commanding ground west of the base. Under the cover of artillery fires provided by B/1/12 and F/2/12 at Khe Sanh and airstrikes of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 3d Marine infantry companies successively secured Hills 861 and 881. By 12 May the enemy's threat to Khe Sanh had been broken and the following day the 26th Marines replaced the 3d Marines. As the first battle of Khe Sanh concluded, B/1/12 was withdrawn and replaced by A/1/13. The two batteries at Khe Sanh were then designated the Provisional Artillery Group: Khe Sanh, and attached to the 26th Marines in order to provide direct support for Operation CROCKETT.

As Operation CROCKETT sought to eliminate the remaining NVA forces in the northwestern sector of Quang Tri Province, Marine, ARVN, and Seventh Fleet SLF forces combined to conduct multiple attacks in the DMZ, south of the Ben Hai River in late May. For several months the NVA had been using the DMZ as an infiltration and staging area for ground, rocket, and artillery attacks on Marine positions to the south. Therefore, directives were issued authorizing friendly forces to enter the DMZ (areas south of the Ben Hai River) and destroy enemy units, installations, and supplies, in addition to establishing a free-fire zone following the evacuation of all area noncombatants. As infantry elements scoured the DMZ area, seven batteries of the 12th Marines combined with air and naval gunfire resources to suppress heavy enemy harassing fires and destroy long suspected enemy mortar and artillery sites which had pounded Marine positions close to the DMZ for some time. With the termination of the operations (HICKORY/LAM SON 54/BEAU CHARGER) on 28 May, the enemy's undisputed hold on the DMZ area south of the Ben Hai River was crushed for the time being.

During Operations HICKORY/BEAU CHARGER, the enemy tried a new tactic in an attempt to destroy Marines forces, but it failed due to the alert artillerymen of the 12th Marines. By

monitoring radio transmissions between BLT 1/3 and the 12th Marines FSCC (Fire Support Coordination Center) at Dong Ha, the enemy became familiar with local requests for fire support. In one instance a request was received at the 12th FSCC asking for a fire mission, but for some reason the originator used the land-line call sign instead of the radio call signal. The puzzled FSCC personnel in return demanded confirmation, but received no reply. A subsequent examination of the target coordinates revealed that the enemy was trying to get Marine artillery to fire into the middle of 1/3's position. The fire mission, needless to say, was ignored. A similar situation had occurred during Operation PRAIRIE the previous year. In the midst of a fire mission by a 155mm battery of the 4th Battalion, a request was received demanding a cease-fire and giving new coordinates for the fire mission. A quick check by battalion FDC personnel revealed that the target was in the middle of known Marine positions. A mission was fired, but not at the coordinates given. Instead, Marine 8-inch howitzers fired on the suspected radio location, and it was not heard from again. (158)

The remainder of 1967 saw batteries of the 12th Marines supporting numerous operations within the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. In Thua Thien Province, cannoneers of the 12th countered enemy movement in such areas as the A Shau Valley. To the north in Quang Tri Province, batteries continued to support Marine operations against heavy enemy pressure at such places as Khe Sanh, Con Thien, and Cam Lo. It was for actions during this period that a member of Battery H, 3d Battalion, 12th Marines was awarded the nation's highest honor--the Medal of Honor. In the early morning hours of 14 October, while occupying a defensive position which protected a vital bridge on the road between Con Thien and Cam Lo, the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines came under a heavy mortar and artillery attack followed by a concerted ground assault by an estimated NVA battalion. (159) The enemy penetrated the defensive perimeter and brought heavy fire upon the battalion command post wounding among others, Sergeant Paul H. Foster, fire support coordination chief, H/3/12. Although wounded, Sergeant Foster continued to direct accurate mortar and artillery fire upon the advancing enemy force. As the fight continued, a hand grenade landed in the position occupied by himself and five other Marines. Without thought of his own safety, Sergeant Foster threw his armored vest and then himself over the grenade and absorbed the entire blast. As a result, Sergeant Foster received severe wounds of which he later died. On 20 June 1969, President Richard M. Nixon posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor to Sergeant Foster.

The year 1967, in addition to being one in which the enemy attempted to make northern I Corps the battle ground, was also one of modernization and expansion for the 12th Marines. In July, the 12th received a new piece of equipment that was to

become standard--the Field Artillery Digital Computer (FADAC). Prior to its arrival, all computations of firing data had been accomplished by hand; now with the FADAC the process of providing a firing battery with accurate data was accelerated. The net effect of the computer was to lessen reaction time from the request for fire support to impact of the round on target, while still maintaining complete accuracy.

Throughout the first five months of 1967, Marine installations in areas south of the DMZ were subjected to heavy enemy mortar, artillery, and rocket attacks. The largest problem in countering the enemy artillery activity was in locating the enemy guns. In order to upgrade the regiment's counterbattery program, Section C, 2d Target Acquisition Battery (USA) was attached to the 12th Marines on 27 October. This unit soon established flash, sound, and radar installations at forward outposts, thus increasing the regiment's capability to perform its counterbattery/mortar mission. In November the regiment was able to report that it now possessed "the capability to engage artillery/mortar targets with a relatively high assurance of achieving neutralization of the target." (160) With the addition of two units which came under the regiment's operational control during the latter part of 1967, the 12th Marines by December had become the largest de facto regiment in the history of the Marine Corps. (161) In addition to its organic battalions--1st, 2d, 3d, and 4th--the 12th Marines then controlled the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines; 1st Battalion, 13th Marines; 1st 8-inch Howitzer Battery; 5th 155mm Gun Battery; 1st Searchlight Battery; and two provisional 155mm howitzer batteries. The regiment also controlled several Army units of the 108th Field Artillery Group which included the 8th Battalion, 4th Artillery; 1st Battalion, 40th Artillery; and the 2d Battalion, 94th Artillery.

In late 1967 and the first months of 1968, the strategy and tactics of the North Vietnamese went through a subtle change. The combination of the enemy's ineffectiveness in the northern provinces and the growing strength of the South Vietnamese forced the leaders in Hanoi to abandon their long-range strategy of defeating Free World forces in the field and adopt the policy of bringing "their military power to bear directly on their main objective--the people and the government of South Vietnam--regardless of cost." (162) In December 1967, information was received and later verified which indicated massive enemy troop movement toward the main centers of population--Saigon, Da Nang, and Hue--and areas south of the Demilitarized Zone, and that major enemy offensive operations would be undertaken prior to or immediately following the Vietnamese Lunar New Year--Tet. Based on the intelligence information and the increasing number of enemy initiated incidents, U.S. military commanders affected a realignment of U.S. ground units throughout South Vietnam to meet the growing enemy threats. As part of the realignment,

the 3d and 4th Battalions, 12th Marines deployed from the Hue/Phu Bai TAOR to Quang Tri Province in mid-January where they joined the remainder of the regiment.

The repositioning of U.S. ground troops could not have come at a more auspicious moment. With the arrival of the Vietnamese New Year celebrations on 29 January, the enemy launched a well coordinated series of major attacks against friendly military installations, lines of communication, and principle Vietnamese cities and administrative centers. Even before the Tet holidays Marines in northern I Corps were actively engaging enemy forces. On 20 January, a Marine company made contact with an entrenched North Vietnamese battalion north of Khe Sanh. Reinforcements were inserted into the area and the second battle for Khe Sanh began. The following day several hill outposts and the base itself came under a heavy, unrelenting enemy mortar, rocket, and artillery barrage. For the next three months the North Vietnamese lashed out time and time again in an effort to drive the Marines from the base and ultimately from the area. In every instance the Marines tightened their defenses and responded with overwhelming massed artillery fires and coordinated air support. "By 1 April the Tet offensive was over, the battle for Hue was fought and won, and the siege of Khe Sanh had just about petered out." (163)

As the 1st Battalion, 13th Marines (164) supported operations in the Khe Sanh area, the remaining elements of the regiment continued to support Marine, ARVN, and U.S. Army forces engaged in combat operations within Quang Tri Province. Simultaneously, batteries located at combat bases within range of the DMZ (Gio Linh, and Cam Lo) continued to shell military targets within the zone and the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. Late in 1967, at the direction of the 3d Marine Division Commanding General, a study was initiated to develop a system that would provide for more efficient management, allocation, application, and coordination of supporting arms employment with respect to the DMZ. Initially, there had been little coordination in the utilization of artillery, naval gunfire, and fixed-wing aircraft in destroying enemy fortifications, and positions from which artillery and rocket attacks were launched against Allied installations in northern Quang Tri Province. All that was done was to increase the counterbattery fire program. The ineffectiveness of this type of response stemmed from three problems: (1) imprecision in locating enemy guns; (2) lack of observation in order to adjust fires; and (3) the late, incomplete, and often times negative results. To facilitate the management of the vast arsenal of supporting arms available, the Fire Support Information Center (FSIC) (165) was activated. The main function of the FSIC was to give an "orderly, graphic presentation of supporting arms information, enabling the Fire Support Coordinator to clearly identify problem areas, and allocated his resources toward their solution." (166) In

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simplified terms, the FSIC acted as a clearing house for all information pertinent to supporting arms, and facilitated the "deliberate advance planning of offensive operations exclusively by supporting arms." (167)

With the termination of the monsoon season in early April, decisions were made to begin a three-phase counteroffensive operation. The primary objectives of the counteroffensive were the relief of Khe Sanh which was being resupplied at that time only by air, a raid into the A Shau Valley in Thua Thien Province, and an attack into the DMZ. On 1 April, a coordinated Marine, ARVN, U.S. Army operation was launched to reestablish land contact with the Khe Sanh base. Light resistance was met as the 1st Marines moved overland in an effort to reopen Route 9. At the same time an ARVN airborne battalion and the 3d Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division moved in a successively southward direction, leap-frogging from position to position. On 4 April, the 26th Marines attacked from the Khe Sanh base itself, linking up with the relief forces two days later. By 9 April, the land route to Khe Sanh was clear. In late April, the 1st Marines took over responsibility for the base's defense, and the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines relieved the 1st Battalion, 13th Marines. With the relief of the base accomplished, III MAF then turned its attention to the other two objectives.

By the end of May, several fresh enemy regiments had moved into the Khe Sanh area and a major attack was imminent. Instead of relying on several established positions from which infantry units covered by artillery support would venture out in search of the enemy, it was decided to employ a number of highly mobile infantry-artillery teams. The plan of operation involved the establishment of several large landing zones and fire support bases (FSB) that would provide the infantry maneuver elements with close, continuous artillery coverage. On 3 June, 1/4 moved into the area after five days of air and artillery preparations and established a landing zone into which A/1/12 was moved two days later. Throughout the succeeding 13 days additional landing zones and fire bases were carved out of the double canopy jungle. Since the landing zones and bases were not within the proximity of land routes, the infantry and artillery elements were totally dependent upon the helicopter for resupply. The importance of this action as part of the overall III MAF Operation SCOTLAND II, was that "it was the first use of mountain-top bases by the 3d Marine Division and they worked well." (168)

The concept of establishing artillery fire support bases was not revolutionary. In late 1965 during Operation HARVEST MOON, artillery batteries were transported by helicopter to forward positions in order to effectively cover the infantry's area of operation. Initially, however, these forward artillery positions were tied to locations near roads which facilitated



A Marine CH-53 (Sea Stallion) delivering an externally loaded 105mm howitzer to FSB Fuller, location of Battery H, 3/12.
(Photo courtesy of Mr. Tom Bartlett, Leatherneck)

their construction and resupply. In early 1968, with improved logistics, additional troops, and the greater availability of helicopter resources in northern I Corps, the 3d Marine Division now employed heliborne infantry supported by quickly established, mutually supporting fire bases. With these bases, the division was then able to move its maneuver elements in a leap-frog manner over the great expanse of mountainous terrain without a loss of artillery support.

The fire support base itself is "essentially a forward artillery position located atop a key terrain feature which can be defended by a minimum of infantry personnel." (169) The construction of an artillery fire base begins with the careful selection of a landing zone (LZ). Once the LZ is selected intensive artillery and airstrikes are directed at the proposed site to discourage enemy troops and clear the area of obstacles. Following the preparations a reconnaissance team or a security force accompanied by an engineer unit is inserted to carry out the initial clearing of the LZ. After the base is cleared and the primary construction completed, the artillery pieces are brought in by helicopter and the fire support base is activated. (170)

In addition to exercising tactical fire direction and providing fire support for Marine, U.S. Army, and ARVN forces engaged in combat operations within Quang Tri Province during the remainder of 1968, elements of the 12th Marines (-) (171) continued to conduct a number of artillery raids in the DMZ and the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. The major raid of 1968 began 1 July as units of the regiment combined with Marine, Navy, and Air Force attack aircraft; B-52s of the Strategic Air Command; and ships of the Seventh Fleet, to destroy enemy sanctuaries and artillery positions in the DMZ area. The seven-day barrage created by Operation THOR was quickly exploited by infantry elements which invested areas south of the DMZ, destroying enemy forces, fortifications, and supply caches. In addition, the operation was successful in regaining control of the DMZ to the extent that incoming enemy fire was sharply reduced and Allied aerial observers were once again free to fly over the zone.

What began as a year of intense combat activity in I Corps ended with the enemy pulling back his main force units into sanctuaries in Laos and North Vietnam. For the 12th Marines the period was marked by a contrast in the number of positions occupied by firing batteries. At the beginning of the year, the 12th Marines supported a large area of operation and had under its operational control 35 firing units situated at 12 locations from Gio Linh to Phu Bai. But a series of developments during the year reduced the number of firing units while increasing the number of positions. The first occurred in April when the regiment lost operational control of several Army units as the

108th Field Artillery Group was transferred to the control of the Provisional Corps, Vietnam (later XXIV Corps) at Phu Bai. The second took place in July following the reduction of the area of operation to the approximate boundaries of Quang Tri Province, when the accelerated program of fire support base construction was begun. As a result of these two developments, the 12th Marines by December controlled 22 firing units situated at 21 locations throughout Quang Tri Province. This dispersal and reduction in the number of units had little effect upon the performance of the regiment's mission, even though at times this imposed an increased burden on the remaining units. To increase the firepower available to the regiment on fire support bases and to compensate for the loss of long-range support, additional towed 155mm howitzers were added during August to augment the regiment's existing 155mm howitzers. By the end of 1968, with the increased mobility of the regiment and the ceasefire in and north of the DMZ, artillery support requirements remained relatively steady, despite the reduction in the number of firing batteries assigned to the 12th Marines.

The momentum achieved by the success of 3d Marine Division operations in northern I Corps during 1968 was expanded during 1969. Combat operations, though fewer in number, carried the fight to the enemy's western base areas, cutting his lines of communication and supply, destroying his hidden war material, and resulting in a greater number of enemy casualties. The beginning of the regiment's fifth and final year in Vietnam saw the 12th Marines again providing tactical fire direction and coordinated fire support for Marine, U.S. Army, and ARVN forces engaged in combat operations within and near Quang Tri Province. These forces included the 3d Marine Division (-) (Rein), 101st Airborne Division (April-June), river patrol craft of Task Force Clearwater, force reconnaissance teams, combined action platoons, 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Infantry Division, and elements of the 1st and 2d ARVN Regiments operating within the 3d Marine Division's area of operation.

The first major operation of 1969 began on 22 January as units of the 9th Marines, 2d ARVN Regiment, and 2d Battalion, 12th Marines combined to initiate Operation DEWEY CANYON in the western reaches of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. The operation was divided into three distinct phases: (1) the displacement of maneuver elements to the area of operation and the construction of mutually supporting fire bases; (2) local saturation patrols; and (3) a conventional search and clear operation in the area. The first phase of the operation began as 9th Marines units were inserted into the area of operation, reopening several previously abandoned fire bases, and began construction on FSB Cunningham. As the operation progressed, FSB Cunningham became its center, not only in terms of containing the control command posts, but in terms of its critical location. The fire support base was situated in the center of the area of



A Marine UH-1E helicopter touches down at FSB Cunningham, as artillerymen of the 12th Marines support 9th Marine units during Operation DEWEY CANYON. (USMC Photo #A192655)



A 105mm howitzer of Battery E, 2/12 at Con Thien firing in support of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. (USMC Photo #371011)

operation and its 11 kilometer artillery fan extended south and southwest to the limits of Area of Operation (AO) (172). Because of its strategic location, Cunningham contained as many as five artillery batteries--two 105mm, two 155mm, and one 4.2-inch mortar battery--at one time.

Several problems were encountered by the 2d Battalion as Phase II and III progressed. The first was the problem of resupply. By early February, the northeastern monsoon was at its height. Weather for helicopter operations was marginal at best. The problem of resupplying forward support bases became acute. By February the 2d Battalion had only enough rations to supply one meal per day per man, and ammunition was scarce. Eventually resupply was accomplished by helicopter and fixed-wing air drops. The second problem was that of the large number of assaults by fire and by ground attacks against artillery fire bases. Since the operation was being conducted within close proximity of the Laotian border, the enemy was able to shell Allied fire bases from positions within Laos which were outside the range of Allied artillery. Similarly, enemy forces were able to launch a series of ground attacks against the majority of active bases and then retreat southwest into Laos.

The success of Operation DEWEY CANYON--which terminated on 18 March--can be measured not only by the quantity of enemy casualties and equipment destroyed or captured, but also by the cooperation and coordination achieved between Marine and ARVN elements and the relationships of intra-service units. In July 1968, Major General Raymond G. Davis, Commanding General, 3d Marine Division, realigned the batteries, companies, battalions, and regiments of the division to restore unit cohesiveness and integrity. Previously, battalions and regiments rarely were composed of their organic subordinate or support units. (173) Operation DEWEY CANYON witnessed the completion of this re-alignment process.

Following the termination of Operation DEWEY CANYON, the regiment continued to support combat operations, and conduct unobserved artillery missions against military targets in the southern portion of the DMZ and throughout Quang Tri Province. The unattended ground sensor capability which was added to the division during the previous year proved to be extremely valuable during 1969 in detecting enemy presence and movement throughout the area of operation. No longer was the regiment wholly dependent upon target acquisition information obtained from ground and aerial observation. With the addition of this family of sophisticated electronic devices, the regiment improved both its offensive and defensive postures.

In addition to being a year of consolidation of the previous year's gains and their exploitation, 1969 was a year of disengagement. The war in Southeast Asia had become an emotional

and physical drain on the American people. No longer were they content to shoulder the major economic and military burdens which they considered to be those of the Vietnamese. In January 1969, the administration of President Richard M. Nixon took office and pledged itself to the disengagement of American troops from Vietnam and the assumption of the American military role by the South Vietnamese, who by mid-1969 possessed a capable military structure. In pursuance with stated policy, the American government initiated the gradual withdrawal of American combat units. The first major Marine ground unit in I Corps to be withdrawn was Regimental Landing Team-9. On 16 July the forward echelon of RLT-9 and the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines embarked on transports for redeployment to Okinawa. By 14 August, the transfer of 2/12 was completed and the battalion took up residence at Camp Hague, Okinawa.

The area of operation remained relatively quiet during the remainder of August and September as the three remaining battalions of the 12th Marines supported combat operations of the 3d Marine Division. In mid-September, however, the entire division received orders to commence stand down operations in preparation for its transfer from Vietnam. The 1st Battalion, 12th Marines on 21 September completed its support of Operation IDAHO CANYON, and stood down along with the 3d Marines for embarkation and redeployment. Nine days later the administrative control of the 1st Battalion passed to the 3d Marines and the battalion prepared to redeploy to Camp Pendleton, California. Prior to departure, the 1st Battalion was cut to cadre strength, as most of its personnel were transferred to the 3d and 4th Battalions, 12th Marines. Following its arrival at Camp Pendleton, the 1st Battalion remained at cadre strength until 30 October when the 3d Battalion, 13th Marines was disbanded and personnel shifted to 1/12, bringing that unit up to authorized strength. (174)

Following the departure of the 1st Battalion, the remaining two battalions began displacing from forward fire support bases to larger coastal combat bases. During the period 19 October to 6 December, all the remaining units of the regiment embarked on board amphibious ships or military aircraft for transfer to Camp Hanson, Okinawa. The 3d Battalion began embarkation on 23 October and completed its redeployment on 6 December. On the morning of 5 November, a detachment of Battery M/4/12 expended the last artillery round fired by the 12th Marines in Vietnam and returned to the Dong Ha Combat Base where it was reduced to zero strength. The following day, the 4th Battalion turned over Camp Romanelli to the 2d ARVN Regiment and moved to Dong Ha where it began embarkation preparations. By 6 December the transfer of the 12th Marines from Vietnam was completed.

The conflict in Vietnam brought about a number of changes in the equipment and weaponry of the 12th Marines. The most notable change was the phasing out of the 107mm mortar or

howtar.(175) In the early sixties, the howtar was seen as the answer to the artillerymen's dream. It was a "helicopter-transportable, high trajectory weapon that could almost go anywhere a Marine could and deliver a round with more punch than a 105mm howitzer."(176) However, as the years progressed the howtar's liabilities(177) became more apparent and the 4.2-inch mortar was reinstituted. The same could be said of the M109 155mm howitzer (self-propelled). With the evolution of both the Marine Corps helicopter lift capabilities and the concepts of mobile artillery, the towed 155mm howitzer became a weapon that was easily transported to isolated fire bases, in contrast with the M109 which was not. The only weapon to remain unchanged was the 105mm howitzer, which again proved to be the most reliable, thus retaining its place as the Marines' basic artillery weapon. In addition to the changes in weaponry, two changes in equipment took place during the Vietnam involvement. The first was the Field Artillery Digital Computer which proved to be a highly accurate, reliable means of computing firing data, thus drastically reducing reaction time. The second change in equipment was the introduction of a new family of radios (PRC-25 series) which replaced the PRC-9 series, and increased the regiment's communications reliability. These changes in both equipment and weaponry had the effect of further improving the 12th Marines combat efficiency.

The primary concern of the 12th Marines in Vietnam was the support of Allied operations. Notwithstanding this basic role, artillerymen of the 12th engaged in an auxiliary war--the war to win the confidence of the Vietnamese people. As an important aspect of the Marine Corps' balanced approach to combat activities in Vietnam, civic action began almost immediately upon the regiment's arrival. The major emphasis of the regiment's civic action effort was concentrated on the Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP), as medical personnel from the regiment made numerous visits to villages surrounding established artillery positions and treated civilians for disease and wounds. The regiment also supplied the local populace with clothing, toilet articles, fertilizer, cooking oil, and school supplies, in addition to furnishing personnel to aid villagers in the construction and rehabilitation of homes, schools, churches, aid stations, and wells in an effort to improve living conditions. Similarly, the regiment supplied personnel who taught rudimentary subjects including English in local elementary and high schools. Though civic action was not the main thrust of the 12th Marines activities in Vietnam and often suffered at the expense of tactical commitments, the program proved to be advantageous to both the artillerymen and the Vietnamese people.

Conclusion (178)

Following its departure from Vietnam, the 12th Marines minus the 1st Battalion(179) was once more based on Okinawa--reoccupying those camps from which it departed in 1965. Its mission--to support the 3d Marine Division and to be prepared to meet a wide variety of assignments--from Japan and Korea in the North, to the Indian Ocean in the South--as part of the ready landing force of the Seventh Fleet.

Since the redeployment of the 12th Marines in December 1969, its role has changed from one of a line combat unit to that of a supporting element of the nation's force-in-readiness in the Western Pacific. As such, the regiment provides batteries for the battalion landing teams which constitute the two special landing forces of the Seventh Fleet. This reorientation has thus placed the major emphasis on extensive field training for amphibious operations. Accordingly, elements of the regiment have participated in several division and multi-national training exercises. One such operation occurred during the period 19 April-29 May 1970, when the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines joined with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Operation GOLDEN DRAGON, a combined U.S./South Korean amphibious landing exercise. In addition to amphibious training exercises, and field firing exercises conducted on Okinawa and at Camp Fuji, Japan, artillerymen of the regiment have participated in extensive classroom training in fire direction techniques, survey, meteorology, and electronic warfare. Total preparedness was again the regiment's goal, and extensive, aggressive training was the means by which this goal was to be achieved.

Though younger than many regiments, the 12th Marines has proven its ability to respond to crisis situations in both war and peace. Should future events threaten the security of the United States or its Allies, the regiment will be ready to undertake any assignment if called upon, and accomplish it with the professionalism that has been its trademark.

Notes

The Formative Years

- (1) Marines of the Montgomery under the command of Captain William Brown joined General Cadwalader's division and served in his artillery during the battle of Princeton. Maj Edwin N. McClellan, History of the United States Marine Corps, Chap. V. v. I (MS), p. 29.
- (2) A Marine Corps-wide redesignation of units in 1930 dropped the title "Regiment" for "Marines."
- (3) As quoted in Kenneth W. Condit and Edwin T. Turnbladh, Hold High the Torch: A History of the 4th Marines (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1960), p. 126, hereafter Condit and Turnbladh, Hold High.
- (4) Ibid., pp. 125-127.
- (5) James S. Santelli, A Brief History of the 4th Marines (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1970), pp. 12-13.
- (6) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 6th Regt, Apr27 (RB, HistDiv, HQMC); Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 4th Regt, Apr27 (RB, HistDiv, HQMC), hereafter Muster Rolls with unit, month, and year.
- (7) Muster Rolls, Prov Regt, Jun27.
- (8) Muster Rolls, Hq & Hq Co, 12th Regt, Oct27; Muster Rolls, 1st Bn, 12th Regt, Oct27; Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 12th Regt, Oct27.
- (9) Condit and Turnbladh, Hold High, pp. 142-143.
- (10) The 2d Battalion had been reduced to a Headquarters and Headquarters Company and two rifle companies by 22 April 1928--the 10th Machine Gun and Howitzer Company and 32d Rifle Company having been in an inactive status due to the lack of replacements since 21 December 1927. Muster Rolls, 10th Co, Dec27; Muster Rolls, 32d Co, Dec27.
- (11) Muster Rolls, Hq & Hq Co, 12th Regt, Apr28; Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 6th Regt, Apr28; Muster Rolls, 1st Sep Bn, Apr28.
- (12) Muster Rolls, Hq & Hq Co, 1st Sep Bn, May28; Muster Rolls, 29th Co, Jul28; Muster Rolls, 31st Co, Jul28.
- (13) "Report of the Major General Commandant of the United States Marine Corps," dtd 30Oct28, as contained in the Annual Reports

of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1928 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), p. 1243.

- (14) 1stLt Robert A. Aurthur, and 1stLt Kenneth Cohlmlia, The Third Marine Division (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), p. 3, hereafter Aurthur and Cohlmlia, Third Marine Division.
- (15) Hq, Amphib Corps, Pac Flt, SO 140-42, dtd 1Sep42 (RG 127, 3d Mar Div File 2385-30/65-3, 1Jan-31Dec42, Central Files, HQMC).
- (16) Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 12th Mar, Jul42.
- (17) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 12th Mar, Jul42.
- (18) Muster Rolls, 5th Bn, 10th Mar, Feb-Jul42.
- (19) Muster Rolls, 1st Bn, 12th Mar, Aug42
- (20) Broken down by subordinate unit, the main weapons of the regiment as of 1 September 1942 were: 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions, thirty-six 75mm Pack Howitzers--four per battery; 4th Battalion, twelve 105mm Howitzers--four per battery; Special Weapons Battery, four 37mm automatic guns (anti-aircraft), four 37mm antitank guns, and two 37mm guns. (D-Tables of Organization, No. 34, dtd 10Jan42 (TO & TE Subject Files, RB, HistDiv, HQMC)).
- (21) Muster Rolls, 4th Bn, 12th Mar, Sep42.
- (22) Muster Rolls, Spec Wpns Btry, 12th Mar, Sep42.
- (23) Muster Rolls, Hq Btry, 12th Mar, Sep42.
- (24) Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 12th Mar, Nov42.
- (25) 12th Mar Ready Rpts, Oct42-Jan43 in 12th Mar War Diaries and Ready Rpts, Oct42-Oct45 (RB, HistDiv, HQMC), hereafter 12th Mar Ready Rpts or WD with date; See also Aurthur and Cohlmlia, Third Marine Division, p. 16.
- (26) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 12th Mar, Jan43.
- (27) Ibid., Mar43.
- (28) Muster Rolls, 1st Sep How Bn, May-Sep42.
- (29) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 12th, Mar-Apr43.
- (30) Muster Rolls, 1st Bn, 12th Mar, Jan43; Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 12th Mar, Jan43.

- (31) BGen John S. Letcher, One Marine's Story (Verona, Virginia: McClure Press, 1970), p. 213, hereafter Letcher, One Marine's Story.
- (32) Muster Rolls, Hq & Svc Btry, 12th Mar, Jan-Feb43; Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 12th Mar, Feb43; Muster Rolls, 4th Bn, 12th Mar, Feb43.

World War II

- (33) Unless otherwise noted, all material cited in this section is located at Reference Branch, Historical Division, HQMC.
- (34) Aurthur and Cohlma, Third Marine Division, p. 17.
- (35) Muster Rolls, 1st Bn, 12th Mar, Feb43; Muster Rolls, 2d Bn, 12th Mar, Mar43.
- (36) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 12th Mar, May43.
- (37) Letcher, One Marine's Story, pp. 216-218.
- (38) During the campaigns of Bougainville and Guam the rising columns of smoke from Japanese cooking fires were used by forward observers to pin-point Japanese troop concentrations for the artillery.
- (39) Maj John N. Rentz, Bougainville and the Northern Solomons (Washington: HistSec, Div of Pub Info, HQMC, 1948), p. 1.
- (40) Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Maj Douglas T. Kane, Isolation of Rabaul: History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, v. II (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1963), pp. 172-178, hereafter Shaw and Kane, Isolation of Rabaul.
- (41) Letcher, One Marine's Story, pp. 232-237.
- (42) The remainder of the regiment departed and arrived Guadalcanal as follows: Regimental headquarters 13 July on board USS Fuller arriving 19 July; 2d Battalion 17 July on board USS Crescent City and American Legion arriving 31 July; 3d and 4th Battalions USS Hunter Liggett arriving 29 July. Muster Rolls, Hq Btry, 2d, 3d, and 4th Bns, 12th Mar, Jul43.
- (43) Letcher, One Marine's Story, pp. 242-244; See also 12th Mar Ready Rpts, Oct43.
- (44) 3d Mar Div, Combat Rpt of 3d Mar Div in Bougainville Ops, 1Nov-28Dec43, dtd 21Mar44, hereafter 3d Mar Div Combat Rpt.
- (45) 3d Mar Div Action Rpt, for Period 1-11Nov43, dtd 18Dec43, hereafter 3d Mar Div AR.

- (46) Ibid.
- (47) A discrepancy exists between accounts of the 12th Marines and the 3d Marine Division. The latter report indicated there were no calls for artillery support on D-Day, while the former indicates the opposite. (12th Mar Rpt of Ops, Nov-Dec43, dtd 26Jan44; 3d Mar Div AR).
- (48) Letcher, One Marine's Story, pp. 254-257.
- (49) 3d Mar Div AR.
- (50) Letcher, One Marine's Story, p. 258.
- (51) Shaw and Kane, Isolation of Rabaul, pp. 261-262.
- (52) Letcher, One Marine's Story, p. 261.
- (53) As quoted in Third Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1953), n.p.
- (54) 3d Mar Div Combat Rpt.
- (55) As quoted in Letcher, One Marine's Story, p. 278.
- (56) Shaw and Kane, Isolation of Rabaul, p. 280.
- (57) As quoted in TSgt Theodore C. Link, "Artillery-Infantry Coordination," Marine Corps Gazette, v. XXVIII, no. 3 (Mar44), p. 50.
- (58) 3d Mar Div AR.
- (59) As quoted in Maj Frank O. Hough, The Island War: The United States Marine Corps in the Pacific (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1947), p. 123, hereafter Hough, The Island War.
- (60) Maj O. R. Lodge, The Recapture of Guam (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1954), p. 26, hereafter Lodge, Recapture of Guam.
- (61) E-Tables of Organization, no. 30, dtd 15Apr43 (TO & TE Subj Files).
- (62) Muster Rolls, 5th Bn, 12th Mar, Feb44.
- (63) F-Tables of Organization, No. 30, dtd 21Feb44 (TO & TE Subj Files).
- (64) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 12th Mar, Mar44; Muster Rolls, 5th Bn, 12th Mar, Mar44.
- (65) Shaw and Kane, Isolation of Rabaul, pp. 507-519.

- (66) Ibid., p. 518.
- (67) Lodge, Recapture of Guam, pp. 4-5.
- (68) Letcher, One Marine's Story, pp. 293-295.
- (69) Ibid.
- (70) Lodge, Recapture of Guam, pp. 29-30.
- (71) Ibid., pp. 32-33.
- (72) LtCol Alpha L. Bowser, Jr., ltr to CMC, dtd 25Feb52 (Guam Supporting Arms Letters File).
- (73) Lodge, Recapture of Guam, p. 47.
- (74) 3d Marine Division Special Action Report, FORAGER Operation, dtd 19Aug44.
- (75) Lodge, Recapture of Guam, p. 85; See also 12th Marines Special Action Report, dtd 21Aug44.
- (76) Ibid., p. 87.
- (77) Special Action Report of 12th Marines, dtd 15Aug44, Encl D to 3d Marine Division Special Action Report, FORAGER Operation, dtd 19Aug44, hereafter 12th Mar SAR, dtd 15Aug44.
- (78) Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, Central Pacific Drive: History of the U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, v. III (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1966), p. 576.
- (79) 12th Mar SAR, dtd 15Aug44.
- (80) Lodge, Recapture of Guam, p. 200; Japanese counterattack was carried out on the night of 25-26 July 1944.
- (81) Letcher, One Marine's Story, p. 318.
- (82) 12th Mar Ready Rpt, dtd 31Oct44.
- (83) LtCol Whitman S. Bartley, Iwo Jima: Amphibious Epic, (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1954), pp. 1-2, hereafter Bartley, Iwo Jima.
- (84) The four avowed reasons were: (1) attack the Japanese empire; (2) protect bases in the Mariana Islands; (3) protect Allied naval forces and conduct search operations in the area; and (4) provide protection for Allied air-strikes at Japan. Two additional reasons were supplied by men involved in the attack: "(1) To secure this lousy

piece of real estate so that we can get the hell off it.
(2) To help as many Nips as possible fulfill their oath to die for the Emperor." As quoted in Hough, The Island War, p. 334, 334n.

- (85) Bartley, Iwo Jima, pp. 51-58
- (86) Ibid., p. 86.
- (87) Ibid., p. 98.
- (88) Colonel Crist assumed command of the regiment from Colonel John B. Wilson, 2 January 1945. Muster Rolls, Hq Btry, 12th Mar, Jan45.
- (89) 12th Marines Action Report, Encl F to 3d Mar Div (Rein) Action Report, Iwo Jima Operation, dtd 30Apr45, hereafter 12th Mar AR.
- (90) Colonel Wilson's recommendation following the Guam operation that the 75mm pack howitzers of the 1st and 2d Battalions be replaced by 105mm howitzers had not been implemented by this time, even though the Muster Rolls for the period January 1945-March 1945 indicate that all four battalions of the regiment were authorized 105mm howitzers. Ibid.
- (91) Ibid.
- (92) Ibid.
- (93) Unit Report No. 11, dtd 6-7Mar45, 2d Bn, 12th Mar.
- (94) 12th Mar AR.
- (95) Bartley, Iwo Jima, p. 181.
- (96) 12th Mar AR.
- (97) 4th Bn, 12th Mar Action Report, Iwo Jima Operation, in 12th Mar AR.
- (98) 12th Mar AR, p. 17.
- (99) Aurthur and Cohlma, Third Marine Division, p. 324.
- (100) G-Tables of Organization, No. 30, dtd May45 (TO & TE Subj Files).
- (101) Muster Rolls, 4th Bn, 12th Mar, Apr45.
- (102) Aurthur and Cohlma, Third Marine Division, p. 326.
- (103) As quoted in Ibid., p. 327.

- (104) War Diary, 12th Mar, dtd 7Nov45 in 12th Mar WD & Ready Rpts, Oct42-Oct45.
- (105) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn, 12th Mar, Oct45.
- (106) Muster Rolls, Hq Btry, 12th Mar, Dec45.
- (107) Ibid., Jan46.

Post War Years

- (108) Col Robert D. Heinl, Jr., Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962 (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1962), p. 519.
- (109) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn (Rein), 12th Mar, May46.
- (110) Muster Rolls, D Btry, 3d Bn, 12th Mar, Jun46.
- (111) Muster Rolls, 1st Bn, 15th Mar, Oct44; Muster Rolls, 4th Bn, 15th Mar, Jul45.
- (112) Henry I. Shaw, Jr., The United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949, (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1968), pp. 14-15.
- (113) Muster Rolls, Arty Bn, 6th Mar Div, Mar46.
- (114) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn (Rein), 12th Mar, Jun46; Muster Rolls, Hq Bn, 3d Mar Bde, Jun46.
- (115) Condit and Turnblad, Hold High, pp. 353-354.
- (116) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn (Rein), 12th Mar, Aug-Sep46; Muster Rolls, Hq Co, Hq Bn, 3d Mar Bde, Sep46.
- (117) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn (Rein), 12th Mar, Oct46-May47.
- (118) Muster Rolls, HqCo, Hq Bn, 3d Mar Bde, Jul47.
- (119) Muster Rolls, 3d Bn (Rein), 12th Mar, Jul47.

Reactivation of the Cold War

- (120) Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: Unit Diaries, hereafter Unit Diaries with unit, month, and year; 3d Marine Division, newspaper, Triad; and 1st Provisional Marine Air-Ground Task Force, after May 1956 1st Marine Brigade, newspaper, Windward Marine. Unless otherwise noted, all material cited in this section is located at Reference Branch, Historical Division, HQMC.

- (121) The 1st Battalion, 12th Marines was composed of a headquarters battery, service battery, and one firing battery (A) at the time of reactivation. The remaining two firing batteries, B and C, were activated in July.
- (122) Rpt of Maj Ex: LEX BAKER 1, Hq 1st Bn, 12th Mar, dtd 7Mar52, in 3d Mar Div Rpt of Maj Ex, LEX BAKER 1, dtd 15Mar52.
- (123) 12th Mar Regt Spec Odr 1-52, dtd 17Mar52 (Unit Diaries, Hq Btry, 12th Mar, Mar52).
- (124) 12th Mar Regt Spec Odr 25-52, Dtd 3May52 (Unit Diaries, Hq Btry, 2d Bn, 12th Mar, May52).
- (125) Rpt of Maj Ex, PHIBEX-1, 12th Mar, dtd 5Nov52, App K to 3d Mar Div Rpt of Maj Ex, PHIBEX-1, dtd 2Jan53.
- (126) "Combat Ready Third Division Parades for Commandant," The Pendleton Scout, v. X, no. 46 (14Nov52), p. 3.
- (127) "FLEX-ONE," The Pendleton Scout, v. X, no. 50 (12Dec52), p. 3.
- (128) 3d Mar Div Type "C" Spec Rpt, Deployment of the 3d Marine Division to the Far East, dtd 29Aug53.
- (129) 3d Mar Div Type "E" Rpt of MARDIVLEX 1-54, dtd 19Jul54.
- (130) 12th Mar Type "B" Report (Command Diary) Second Quarter FY 1955, dtd 31Dec54.
- (131) 12th Mar Type "B" Report (Command Diary) Third Quarter FY-1955, dtd 11Apr55.
- (132) Unit Diaries, Hq Btry, 12th Mar, 1955-1965.
- (133) CMC, Report to the Secretary of the Navy for Fiscal Year 1955, dtd 15Aug55, p. 3.
- (134) As quoted in Triad, v. 3, no. 3 (27Jan55), p. 1.
- (135) TSgt C. C. Hahn, III, "Cannoneers in the Field," Triad, v. 4, no. 11 (23Mar56), pp. 4-5.
- (136) Jack Shulimson, Marines in Lebanon, 1958 (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1966), pp. 24-26.
- (137) Robert B. Asprey, "The New Fleet Marine Force," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, v. 85, no. 8 (Aug59), p. 41.
- (138) Ibid., p. 44.

- (139) "The Special Landing Force," Navy: The Magazine of Sea Power, v. 7, no. 1 (Jan64), p. 10.
- (140) Ibid.
- (141) Capt E.J. Clankson, "3d Division Marines Ordered into Thailand," Triad, v. 13, no. 17 (25May62), p. 1.
- (142) As quoted in Ibid.
- (143) "Division's Artillery Arsenal Adds New Mobile Weapon," Triad, v. 15, no. 20 (12Jun64), p. 1.

Vietnam and Conclusion

- (144) Unless otherwise noted, material in this section is derived from: FMFPac, U. S. Marine Corps Forces in Vietnam, March 1965 - September 1967, v. I: Narrative; FMFPac, Operations of U. S. Marine Forces: Vietnam, Overview and Index; 12th Mar Command Chronologies and subordinate unit Command Chronologies, Mar65-Dec69, hereafter ComdC with unit, month and year; LtCol Ralph Moody, et al., U. S. Marines in Vietnam (MS), pts I, III, VII; Adm U.S.G. Sharp, USN, and Gen W. C. Westmoreland, USA, Report on the War in Vietnam (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated); hereafter Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War; BGen Edwin H. Simmons, USMC, "Marine Corps Operations in Vietnam, 1965-1966," USNI, Naval Review, 1968; BGen Edwin H. Simmons, USMC, "Marine Corps Operations in Vietnam, 1967," USNI, Naval Review, 1969; BGen Edwin H. Simmons, USMC, "Marine Operations in Vietnam, 1968" USNI, Naval Review, 1970; BGen Simmon's works hereafter cited as Simmons, "Vietnam," with year. Unless otherwise noted, material in this section is located at Reference Branch, HistDiv, HQMC.
- (145) Designation was changed from III Marine Expeditionary Force on 7 May to III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) because the word "Expeditionary" resurrected memories of the French colonial forces.
- (146) Simmons, "Vietnam, 1965-1966," p. 15.
- (147) This authorization also applied to other commands throughout South Vietnam.
- (148) Quoted in "Fire for Effect," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 19, no. 9 (Sep65), p. 5.
- (149) 2/12, ComdC, Dec65.
- (150) In March 1966, 3/12 moved by sea transport from Chu Lai to Phu Bai and on 28 March assumed the mission of

supporting the 4th Marines at that location. The following month, 4/12 moved by road from Phu Bai to Da Nang and assumed a general support/reinforcing role of 1/12 and 2/12.

- (151) Maj D. A. Colby, and Maj B. N. Bittner, "Recon's Artillery," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 51, no. 1 (Jan67), p. 51.
- (152) The 1st Battalion at this time was composed of: Hq Btry, 1/12, A/1/11, B/1/12, Mortar Btry, 1/12, and K/4/12 in general support/reinforcing.
- (153) 12th Mar, ComdC, Apr66; 1/12, ComdC, Apr66.
- (154) General Lewis W. Walt, Strange War, Strange Strategy (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), p. 140.
- (155) Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War, p. 131.
- (156) Ibid., p. 133.
- (157) At Dien Bien Phu, the French valley fortress was besieged for three months by Viet Minh troops which controlled the high ground surrounding the base and subjected it to artillery barrages and human-wave attacks. The fortress was overrun in early May 1954 and signaled the final defeat of French colonial aims in Indochina.
- (158) "Explosive Results," Sea Tiger (5Oct66), p. 5.
- (159) 2/4, ComdC, Oct67.
- (160) 12th Mar, ComdC, Nov67.
- (161) Sgt John Martin, "High Voltage," Leatherneck, v. 51, no. 8 (Aug68), p. 24.
- (162) Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War, p. 136.
- (163) Simmons, "Vietnam, 1968," p. 303.
- (164) The 1st Battalion, 13th Marines was at this time under the operational control of the 26th Marines at Khe Sanh and under the administrative control of the 12th Marines.
- (165) The FSIC was not within the Marine T/O structure. It was established in this instance to accomplish a specific task and was to work in conjunction with the FSCC.
- (166) 12th Mar, ComdC, Apr68.
- (167) Ibid.

- (168) Simmons, "Vietnam, 1968," p. 331.
- (169) MajGen R. C. Davis, and 1stLt H. W. Brazier, "Defeat of the 320th," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 53, no. 3 (Mar69), p. 26.
- (170) For a more detailed discussion of FSB planning and construction see the following: Maj Robert V. Nicoli, "Fire Support Base Development," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 53, no. 9 (Sep69), pp. 38-43.
- (171) On 9 December, units of the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines (-) moved to the An Hoa area south of Da Nang and came under the operational control of the 1st Division. There it supported elements of the 3d Marines engaged in Operation TAYLOR COMMON until it rejoined the regiment on 17 February 1969.
- (172) 1stLt Gordon M. Davis, "Dewey Canyon," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 53, no. 7 (Jul69), p. 36.
- (173) Ibid., pp. 34-35.
- (174) Unit Diary, 3/13, Oct69.
- (175) The 107mm mortars were phased out of each division and turned over to force logistics Command for disposition beginning in early 1967. III MAF ComdC, Mar67.
- (176) "Howtar is Phased Out," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 53, no. 10 (Oct69), p. 1.
- (177) The liabilities of the howtar were: (1) weight--one howtar equaled to the weight of one 4.2-inch mortar plus 24 rounds of ammunition; (2) the sight of the howtar had a tendency to move off-center during traverse, introducing deflection error; (3) there was a possibility of hang-fires when using the howtar at low elevation; (4) large deflection changes on the howtar required that the trail be shifted and dug-in again; (5) loading of the weapon was extremely cumbersome.
- (178) 12th Mar, ComdC, Jan70-Jun71.
- (179) The 1st Battalion, 12th Marines was located at Camp Pendleton, California until 7 June 1971 when it deployed to Hawaii where it joined the 1st Marine Brigade. 1/12, ComdC, Jan70-Jun71.

Abbreviations

AO - Area of Operation
APA - Attack Transport
ARVN - Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BLT - Battalion Landing Team
DMZ - Demilitarized Zone
DUKW - Amphibious Truck
FADAC - Field Artillery Digital Computer
FDC - Fire Direction Center
FEBA - Forward Edge of the Battle Area
FEX - Firing Exercise
FIREX - Firing Exercise
FSCC - Fire Support Coordination Center
FSIC - Fire Support Information Center
GVN - Government of South Vietnam
LEX - Landing Exercise
LSM - Landing Ship, Medium
LST - Landing Ship, Tank
LVT - Landing Vehicle, Tracked
MAB - Marine Amphibious Brigade
MAF - Marine Amphibious Force
MARDIVLEX - Marine Division Landing Exercise
MEB - Marine Expeditionary Brigade
MEDCAP - Medical Civic Action Program
NVA - North Vietnamese Army
PHIBEX - Amphibious Exercise
RCT - Regimental Combat Team
RLT - Regimental Landing Team
RVN - Republic of Vietnam
SEATO - Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SLF - Special Landing Force
SOP - Standing Operating Procedure
TAOR - Tactical Area of Responsibility
VC - Viet Cong or Vietnamese Communist

Commanding Officers, 12th Marines

LtCol Jesse F. Dyer 4 Oct 1927 - 1 Apr 1928

Regiment Deactivated 22 Apr 1928

Regiment Reactivated 1 Sep 1942

Col John B. Wilson 1 Sep 1942 - 1 Jan 1945

LtCol Raymond F. Crist, Jr. 2 Jan 1945 - 1 Apr 1945

Col Joseph W. Earnshaw 2 Apr 1945 - 8 Jan 1946

Regiment Deactivated 8 Jan 1946

Regiment Reactivated 17 Mar 1952

LtCol Earl J. Rowse 17 Mar 1952 - 3 Apr 1952

LtCol Hoyt U. Bookhart, Jr. 4 Apr 1952 - 25 Jul 1952

Col Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. 26 Jul 1952 - 23 May 1954

Col Kenneth A. Jorgenson 24 May 1954 - 1 Oct 1954

Col Louis A. Ennis 2 Oct 1954 - 21 Jul 1955

LtCol Peter H. Hahn 22 Jul 1955 - 12 Sep 1955

Col William C. Capehart 13 Sep 1955 - 1 Mar 1956

Col John S. Twitchell 2 Mar 1956 - 20 Jun 1956

LtCol William G. Muller, Jr. 21 Jun 1956 - 28 Jul 1956

Col Forest C. Thompson 29 Jul 1956 - 2 Jun 1957*

Col William F. Kramer 12 Jun 1957 - 21 Jun 1958

Col Norman A. Miller, Jr. 22 Jun 1958 - 17 Sep 1958

LtCol Joe B. Russell 18 Sep 1958 - 31 Dec 1959

LtCol Walter C. Wells 1 Jan 1960 - 25 Feb 1960

Col James P. Rathbun 26 Feb 1960 - 28 Mar 1961

Col Grant S. Baze 29 Mar 1961 - 22 Jul 1961

Col Clifford B. Drake 23 Jul 1961 - 3 Aug 1962

Col Nat M. Pace 4 Aug 1962 - 10 Aug 1963

Col Winsor V. Crockett, Jr. 12 Aug 1963 - 6 May 1964

Col William P. Pala 7 May 1964 - 15 Jul 1965

LtCol Walter E. Stuenkel 16 Jul 1965 - 30 Jul 1965

Col James K. Callender 31 Jul 1965 - 30 Jun 1966

Col Benjamin S. Read 1 Jul 1966 - 23 Jan 1967

Col William R. Morrison 24 Jan 1967 - 20 Jul 1967

Col Edwin S. Schick, Jr. 21 Jul 1967 - 21 May 1968

Col Wilson A. Kluckman 22 May 1968 - 4 Jul 1968

Col Peter J. Mulroney 5 Jul 1968 - 11 Jul 1969

Col Wallace W. Crompton 12 Jul 1969 - 25 Feb 1970

Col Robert E. Parrott 26 Feb 1970 - 2 Aug 1970

Col Joris J. Snyder 3 Aug 1970 - 11 Jun 1971

Col John P. O'Connell 11 Jun 1971 -

* Commanding Officer does not appear on unit diary.

Chronology, 12th Marines

4 Oct 1927	12th Regiment of Marines activated from personnel of former Provisional Regiment, 3d Marine Brigade at Tientsin, China
22 Apr 1928	12th Regiment disbanded at Tientsin, China
15 Jul 1942	2d Battalion, 12th Marines reactivated at New River Marine Base, North Carolina
22 Jul 1942	3d Battalion, 12th Marines activated at New River Marine Base, North Carolina
14 Aug 1942	5th Battalion, 10th Marines redesignated 1st Battalion, 12th Marines at Camp Elliott, California
1 Sep 1942	12th Marines regimental headquarters and 4th Battalion, 12th Marines activated at Camp Elliott, California
16 Sep 1942	12th Marines formally assigned to 3d Marine Division
12 Oct 1942	12th Marines (-) moves to Camp Dunlap, California where it was joined by the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines on 15 Nov 1942
24 Jan- 11 Mar 1943	12th Marines (-) deployed to New Zealand
20 Feb 1943	3d Battalion, 12th Marines redesignated 3d Battalion, 14th Marines at New River Marine Base, North Carolina
1 Mar 1943	1st Separate Pack Howitzer Battalion redesignated 3d Battalion, 12th Marines at Pago Pago, American Samoa
31 May 1943	3d Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to New Zealand
30 Jun- 29 Jul 1943	12th Marines deployed to Guadalcanal
1 Nov- 15 Dec 1943	Participation in Bougainville Campaign
1 Feb 1944	5th Battalion, 12th Marines activated at Guadalcanal

30 Mar 1944	3d Battalion, 12th Marines redesignated 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalion, 4th Marines
31 Mar 1944	5th Battalion, 12th Marines redesignated 3d Battalion, 12th Marines
21 Jul- 10 Aug 1944	Participation in Guam Campaign
24 Feb- 8 Apr 1945	Participation in Iwo Jima Campaign
5 Apr 1945	1st and 4th Battalions, 12th Marines exchange designations
31 Aug 1945	3d Battalion, 12th Marines disbanded on Guam
1 Dec- 29 Dec 1945	12th Marines (-) deployed to Camp Pendleton, California
8 Jan 1946	12th Marines disbanded at Camp Pendleton, California
22 May 1946	Artillery Battalion, 3d Marine Brigade redesignated 3d Battalion, 12th Marines at Tsingtao, China
24 Aug- 11 Sep 1946	3d Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to Camp Pendleton, California
16 Jul 1947	3d Battalion, 12th Marines redesignated 4th Battalion, 11th Marines at Camp Pendleton, California
20 Jun 1951	1st Battalion, 12th Marines reactivated at Camp Pendleton, California
17 Mar 1952	12th Marines regimental headquarters reactivated at Camp Pendleton, California
3 May 1952	2d Battalion, 12th Marines reactivated at Camp Pendleton, California
1 Jul 1952	4th Battalion, 12th Marines reactivated at Camp Pendleton, California
5 Sep 1952	3d Battalion, 12th Marines reactivated at Camp Pendleton, California
5 Aug- 28 Aug 1953	12th Marines deployed to Japan

20 Jan 1955	3d Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to Hawaii to join 1st Provisional Marine Air-Ground Task Force (later 1st Marine Brigade)
8 Jun 1955- 22 Mar 1957	12th Marines (-) deployed to Okinawa
8 Mar 1965	A/1/12 deployed to Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam with BLT 3/9
10 Mar 1965	F/2/12 deployed to Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam with BLT 1/3
11 Mar- 27 Mar 1965	3d Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to Okinawa
8 Apr- 12 Apr 1965	1st Battalion, 12th Marines (-)(Rein) deployed to Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam
28 Apr- 7 May 1965	3d Battalion, 12th Marines (-)(Rein) deployed to Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam
26 Jun- 8 Jul 1965	12th Marines regimental headquarters, 2d Battalion (-)(Rein) deployed to the Republic of Vietnam
16 Jul- 14 Aug 1969	2d Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to Okinawa
1 Oct 1969	1st Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to Camp Pendleton, California at cadre strength
19 Oct- 6 Dec 1969	12th Marines (-) deployed to Okinawa
30 Oct 1969	3d Battalion, 13th Marines disbanded and personnel transferred to 1st Battalion, 12th Marines at Camp Pendleton, California
7 Jun 1971	1st Battalion, 12th Marines deployed to Hawaii to join 1st Marine Brigade, FMF

Honors of the 12th Marines

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION STREAMER

(Vietnam, 12 Jul 1965 - 15 Sep 1967)

NAVY COMMENDATION STREAMER WITH ONE BRONZE STAR

(Empress Augusta Bay and Guam, 1 Nov 1943 - 12 Jan 1944
and 21 Jul 1944 - 10 Aug 1944)
(Iwo Jima, 19 - 28 Feb 1945)

ASIATIC-PACIFIC CAMPAIGN STREAMER WITH FOUR BRONZE STARS

(Treasury-Bougainville Operation, 1 Nov - 15 Dec 1943)
(Consolidation of Solomon Islands, 18 Jan - 3 Jun 1944)
(Marianas Operation, 21 Jul - 15 Aug 1944)
(Iwo Jima Operation, 19 Feb - 15 Mar 1945)

WORLD WAR II VICTORY STREAMER

(1 Sep 1942 - 8 Jan 1946)

NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE STREAMER WITH ONE BRONZE STAR

(17 Mar 1952 - 27 Jul 1954)
(1 Jan 1961 - to date)

KOREAN SERVICE STREAMER

(27 Aug 1953 - 27 Jul 1954)

VIETNAM SERVICE STREAMER WITH TWO SLIVER AND ONE BRONZE STARS

(Vietnam Defense Campaign, 10 Apr - 24 Dec 1965)
(Vietnamese Counteroffensive Campaign, 25 Dec 1965 - 30 Jun 1966)
(Vietnamese Counteroffensive Phase II, 1 Jul 1966 - 31 May 1967)
(Vietnamese Counteroffensive Phase III, 1 Jun 1967 - 29 Jan 1968)
(Tet Counteroffensive, 30 Jan - 1 Apr 1968)
(Vietnamese Counteroffensive Phase IV, 2 Apr 1968 - 30 Jun 1968)
(Vietnamese Counteroffensive Phase V, 1 Jul 1968 - 1 Nov 1968)
(Vietnamese Counteroffensive Phase VI, 2 Nov 1968 - 22 Feb 1969)
(Tet 69/Counteroffensive, 23 Feb 1969 - 8 Jun 1969)
(Vietnam, Summer-Fall 1969, 9 Jun 1969 - 31 Oct 1969)
(Vietnam, Winter-Spring 1970, 1 Nov 1969 - 5 Nov 1969)

VIETNAM CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM

(10 Apr 1965 - 5 Nov 1969)